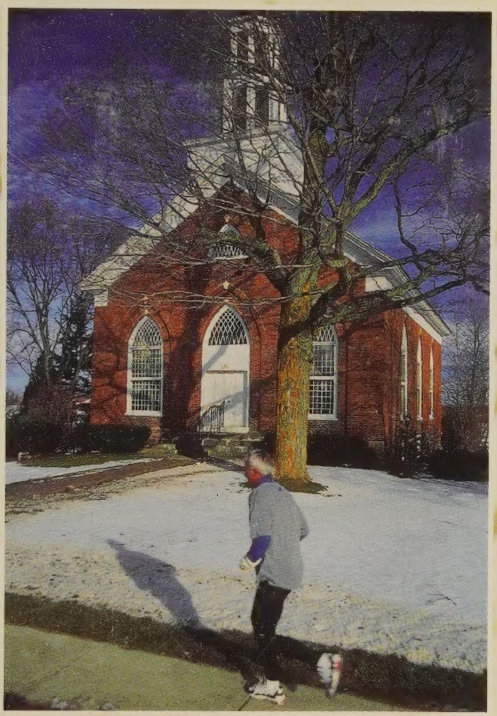
Thomas Chittenden's Town

A Story of

WILLISTON, VERMONT



WILLARD STERNE RANDALL

and

NANCY NAHRA

$25

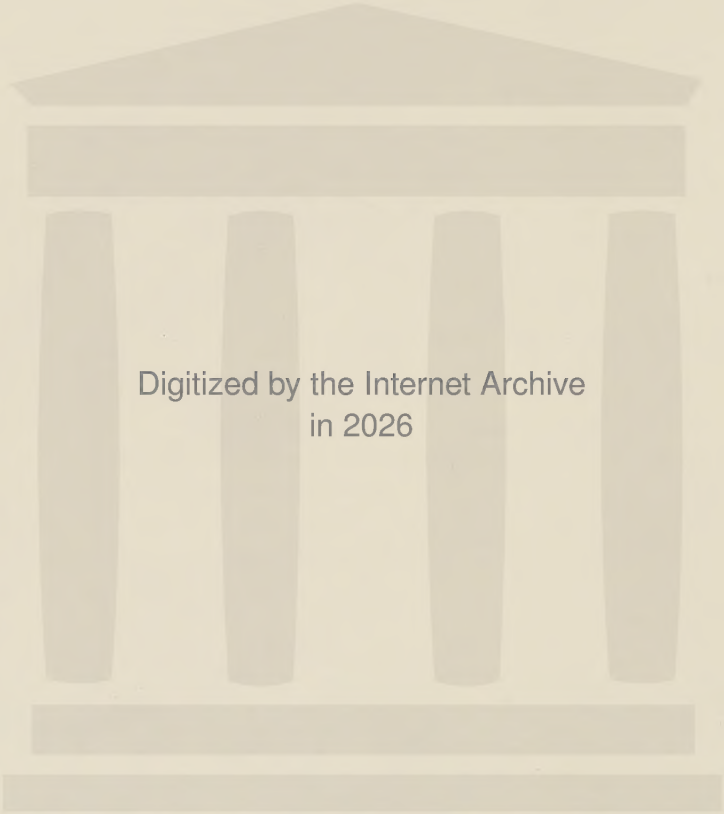
In a single day in 1763, Benning Wentworth, the royal governor of New Hampshire colony, chartered eighteen new townships on the Vermont frontier in little more time than it took to pocket the gold coins he received for his fees. The town of Williston, named for a New York Quaker merchant-speculator who never saw it, was born. It was another decade before, on the eve of the American Revolution, Colonel Thomas Chittenden led the first settlers up from overcrowded Connecticut to build cabins along the Winooski River. The town that Chittenden, Vermont's first governor, founded boasted forty settlers by the time the British attacked in the summer of 1776. The story of Chittenden's life, so intertwined with the growth of Williston in its first generation, is told in full in this narrative chronicle of a small Vermont town and its struggles to survive a continuing series of challenges from forces beyond its borders.

The authors, veteran researchers and writers of history and biography, trace the rise of early Vermont and one of its fastest-growing towns (once larger than neighboring Burlington). They bring us the sights and sounds of clearing the forests, damming the river, building fine houses and barns, churches and taverns. Farmers and businessmen flourish side-by-side. By late 19th Century, the largest poultry shipment on record was sent from the world's first cold-storage plant in a now-vanished industrial village; nearby, Vermont's largest dairy farm produced 150,000 pounds of butter a year.

Thomas Chittenden's Town is seen through 150 photos and through the eyes of its people, their accounts drawn from family papers, town and state archives, school superintendents' reports and diaries and letters of kinsmen who went away to school, to war. Village and farm yielded more than their quota of Civil War soldiers who fought and died at Gettysburg, Cedar

continued on back flap

WILLISTON
Scale 1½ Inches to the Mile.
1869
WINOOSKI RIVER
VERMONT CENTRAL R.R.
NORTH WILLISTON P.O.
DIST No 1
DIST No 2
DIST No 12
DIST No 7
DIST No 3
D.Shean
Res.
Geo Osborne
N.M.Fay
J.Fay
L.H.Talcott
Res
L.H.Talcott
J.Fay
J.Whitcomb
R.King
J.Jewett
School No 2
R.B.Fay
H.Fay
W.Thompson
W.J.Marshall
Geo A Chapman
H.I.Fay
W.J.Marshall
N.Bushnell
Mrs Reed
Geo Amy
A.Bushnell
J.Sena
Geo Pape
W.Yale
School No 12
L.J.Chapin
S.Caswell
J.C.Gallagher
J.H.Bushnell
G.W.Brownell
P.Bliss
A.Shaw
T.Bradley
Mrs Reynolds
H.L.Charles
D.B.Fay
C.E.Miller
H.A.Clark Res
H.A.Clark
J.Clark
J.Johnson
T.Lee
D.B.Fay
H.Walston
H.F.Barber
Cong Ch
W.St
School No 3
Dr A C Welch
W.Miller
Cem
H.Phelps
J.Johnson
A.Bradley
J.S.Cully
Cem
C.P.Bliss
Chas.Seymour
F.Baker
P.Doherty
Wm Brown
Mrs Derby
C.Keefe
G.Brown
D.Bishop
School
Brook
D.Johnson
C.Walston
H.Joslyn
H.Joslyn
H.Nichols
JERICHO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THOMAS CHITTENDEN'S TOWN

A Story of

WILLISTON, VERMONT

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THOMAS JEFFERSON: A LIFE

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AT WAR WITH HIS SON

BUILDING 6: THE TRAGEDY AT BRIDESBURG
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NOT FROM AROUND HERE

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE LAKE (editor)

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FORGOTTEN AMERICANS

AMERICAN LIVES

This conjectural portrait of Thomas Chittenden, a founder of the Town of Williston and the first governor of Vermont, was commissioned in the 1880's by his grandson, Lucius Chittenden, from family drawings made from memory. No portrait from life has been found.

Thomas Chittenden's Town

A Story of WILLISTON, VERMONT

By
WILLARD STERNE RANDALL
And
NANCY NAHRA

Williston Historical Society
Williston, Vermont

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Printed in the United States of America.

Jacket photograph by Fred Stetson
Design by Thomas Brownell
Set in Caslon type.

To

All Those Members of the

Williston Historical Society

Who Have Labored to Keep Alive

The History of Their Town

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The authors are grateful to a number of people who, over the past three years of our research and writing about Williston, have helped us. First, we want to thank the History Committee of the Williston Historical Society for selecting us from a field of historians and then funding our efforts with a generous grant. The committee, chaired by Lincoln Brownell, has included Wolfgang and Barbara Mieder, Mary Tuthill, and Marge Swift, Jack Price and Bob Reese. We want to thank Lincoln Brownell especially for providing us access to his family papers, records and books. Rickie Emerson, director of the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library, has been especially generous and patient with materials from the Williston History Room and kindly provided office space. Pat Peterson allowed us the use of her late husband, Dr. Oscar Peterson's papers: this book could not have been undertaken without the forty years of interest and dedicated notetaking of "Doc" Peterson, who died before he could complete his work. We also want to thank Barney Bloom at the Vermont Historical Society, Karen Stites Campbell in Special Collections at the Bailey/Howe Library of the University of Vermont, Penny Pillsbury, director of the Brownell Memorial Library in Essex Junction, and at St. Michael's College, Director Pat Suozzi, General Services Librarian Mark McAteer, Reference Librarians Michelle McCaffrey and Steve Burks and Interlibrary Loan Librarian Kristin Hindes who granted us special research privileges and gave us timely and cheerful assistance, bringing us books from all over North America and allowing us to keep them longer than we had any right to expect.

Our research was made much easier by the courteous staff of Williston Town Clerk Arlene Degree. To Marion Parker Marvin we are grateful for the use of so many family papers and photographs. We also wish to thank a number of researchers whose earlier efforts have made this book possible. To all the editors and contributors to the Newsletter of the Williston Historical Society over the past twenty-five

years, we owe thanks for their exemplary efforts. To Esther Urie, Betty Bandel, Ruth Painter and Kevin Graffignino, we owe special thanks for the help provided by their initial research. To Chuck Sears, specialist in laser photo enhancement at Mailboxes, Etc., in Burlington, our thanks for patient assistance in bringing old photographs back to life. Once again Diann Varricchione has worked with us patiently to produce the numerous drafts of this book as she has with so many others over the past ten years. And, finally, we are indebted to Phil Gramling of Queen City Printers Inc. for his skilled, smooth and always cheerful assistance in turning our manuscript into a book.

THOMAS CHITTENDEN'S TOWN

A Story of

WILLISTON, VERMONT

CHAPTER ONE

From Frontier to Factories:

The Evolution of Williston

FOR NEARLY two centuries, the Winooski River Valley was a no-man's-land between English settlements pushing constantly northward from Connecticut and Massachusetts and the paramilitary French *habitants* of Quebec Province. Four times between 1685 and 1763, the ever-present tensions flared into open warfare—and Abenaki Indians, raiding south from their base on the St. Francis River in Canada, raced east along their Winooski River warrior path to the White River, then south along the Connecticut River to strike the frontier settlements dotting the Berkshire Mountains. The first whites to see Williston probably were hostages taken back to Canada by the Abenakis. And right behind them were English colonists bent on rescuing the captives before they reached Lake Champlain.

Not until the French abandoned the Lake Champlain region during the last French and Indian War was settlement by eager English colonists possible. French forts and stockades a day's canoe trip from each other had secured the French claims for generations—including, modern archaeolo-

gists assert, a camp at Colchester Point near the mouth of the Winooski. But British-American soldiers, including, according to persistent family tradition, Colonel Thomas Chittenden of Litchfield County, Connecticut, had seen and remembered the Champlain Valley with its wide, rich intervale, ideal for farming, and its towering stands of timber close to the strong current of the river.

In 1760, the French under Montcalm and Bougainville blew up their forts, spiked their cannons, razed the veterans' villages and the churches they had constructed from Ticonderoga to Swanton and retreated for their last stand in Quebec. Defeated and humiliated, they ceded Canada to the English in the Treaty of Paris of 1763. That started a land rush into the vacuum they left in the no-man's land between Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River.

Two English colonies, New York and New Hampshire, claimed the unnamed territory. In one hour on one day, June 7th, 1763, Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire signed the papers which chartered half a dozen townships—including Williston and all its neighbors. Each grant chartered a township six miles square—with choice land reserved for the official Church of England and the customary 500 acres for Governor Wentworth. The royal governor also pocketed some gold coins—his fees for granting lands he had never seen to investors who also had never seen them in the name of faraway King George III, who never came to America.

At the top of the list of Proprietors of the new township of Williston was its namesake, Colonel Samuel Willis, a sometime militia officer who had at least seen southern Vermont and who went back to Jericho, Long Island, where he evidently was a prosperous merchant, to drum up interest among other investors in speculating in the reputedly-fertile Winooski Valley. After years of huge British subsidies to pay, feed and clothe their colonial armies, New Yorkers were flush with cash and eager to invest it in land that could be sold or

New Hampshire Royal Governor Benning Wentworth chartered Williston in 1763.

leased to settlers. Under the charter agreement, the Williston investors were ordered to convene the first Proprietors' Meeting on July 19, 1763. Dr. Samuel Allen, one of the proprietors, was to serve as the township's first moderator. The meeting was to be held in Huntington, Long Island, where most of the Proprietors lived.

Accordingly, the first meeting of Williston's proprietors was held 350 miles away on Long Island's north shore. The meeting took place in Nathaniel Williams's general store. Dr. Allen, who had accumulated cash from treating the slaves of Long Island's rich landowners, was elected town clerk. Williams and Reuben and Thomas Brush were chosen selectmen. Solomon Ketcham was elected town treasurer and Samuel Willis was selected to find someone to "set up monuments the length of said township adjoining the river"—in other words, stake out their claim. Of the 65 proprietors present or represented by proxy at Nathaniel Williams' store on Long Island that summer day in 1763, nine were also investors in other newly-minted townships touching the Winooski River. In addition to Samuel Willis, Thomas Atkinson, Samuel Averill, William Frost, Stephen Wood and Tunis Wortman had also bought shares in the new township of Burlington—which was named after a West Chester County Quaker merchant named William Burling. In all, Burling had purchased some 40,000 acres in the region. Willis, also a Quaker, bought shares in Colchester and Shelburne as well (a share was roughly 300 acres). The other shareholders were Governor Wentworth, his relatives and a few of his friends from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, all of whom frequently speculated in virgin timberlands and sold the best trees for masts for the King's ships.

Many of the Winooski Valley proprietors were Quakers who had been fined heavily for refusing on religious grounds to fight or support militia which fought in the French and Indian Wars. When they refused to fight, they faced confiscation of their properties. Instead, they usually paid three

shillings in gold for each day's drilling they missed, the equivalent of a day's pay for a skilled artisan. Could these fines have been their motive for wanting to establish a settlement in the Vermont wilderness to which they might flee?

Williston's first absentee landowners were prosperous. Dr. Allen's will shows he owned not only land but slaves, wore silver shoe buckles and gold sleeve buttons and had silver serving pieces on his dinner table. Few if any of the first proprietors of Williston ever saw their land. Several of them, including Willis, were to be pro-British Loyalists during the American Revolution and had to flee the new United States for their lives. The sons of others served in the American army and, unable to find fertile farmland in heavily-settled surrounding states, migrated to Williston with their families after the Revolution. Peter Benedict, Jr., took up his father's land grant in Williston. Dropping out of Yale College when the Revolution broke out, he had marched with General Richard Montgomery's army into Canada when it besieged St. John and captured Montreal. He had served as a second lieutenant in the 3rd New York Continental Regiment and he turned down promotion to first lieutenant to go home and provide for his family. Promotion would have meant a commitment to serve in the army for the duration of the war and he said he simply couldn't afford the honor.

Eventually, Peter Benedict moved his family to Williston and opened a tavern on the border with Burlington along what became Route 2. Buried in the small cemetery near Burlington International Airport is his young friend, Samuel Allen, son of the moderator of that first Proprietor's Meeting and also a veteran of the Revolutionary War. The second and third generation of Williston Proprietors were among the first to be buried in the town. A marble gravestone "sacred to the memory of Samuel Allen" marks the grave of the 52-year-old veteran. (A third generation Samuel Allen, aged fourteen months, lies where he was buried on August 1, 1797.) For years, a small flag fluttered over the site to honor

one of Williston's Revolutionary War generation. In 1837, Samuel Allen's widow, Pamela, age 75, was still alive. After all those years, when Congress saw how poorly many of the old veterans and their families were living, it made small pensions available. Pamela Allen applied for her late husband's Revolutionary War pension. Her pension claim was as fuzzy as her memory. She could only remember he had enlisted in New York City, fought under George Washington at the Battle of White Plains and had retreated with the Continental Army when the British Army occupied New York City. Even after his hitch as a sergeant in the Continental army, he had served as a Minute Man in North Salem before they emigrated to Williston. She had relatives and friends who attested to her affidavit. Her pension was finally approved by a dilatory Congress—six years after she died.

It was the Revolutionary War that finally spurred anything more than speculative interest in the Winooski Valley. Not a single settler came to Williston for ten years after it was patented. Then, in 1773, Thomas Chittenden and Jonathan Spafford of overcrowded Litchfield County in northwestern Connecticut began casting about for suitable farmland for their large families. For years, their Connecticut neighbors, the Allen clan—principally the oldest brother, Ethan—had been trying to sell lands in what had become known as the New Hampshire Grants. The hitch was that the Allens could not offer clear title. In addition to New Hampshire's royal governor, the governors of New York Province were also issuing land patents to the forests and mountains between Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River—which they considered nothing more than counties of New York. Between 1749 and 1764 Benning Wentworth had issued 135 township grants. The first, Bennington, still bears his name. Settlers had already begun to chop down the forests to build homes by the time New Yorkers took issue with the New Hampshire grants. They argued that the 1664 royal grant to the Duke of York included "all the lands from the west side of the Connecticut River to the east side of the Delaware Bay."

Agreeing to turn the dispute over to the King's Privy Council in London for arbitration, the New Yorkers sent agents to the hearing—who lied by testifying that all the settlers already on the contested ground were amenable to New York government and wouldn't mind applying for—and paying fees for—confirmatory grants. The July, 1764, royal ruling was that New York, indeed, extended to the "western bank of the Connecticut River." At first, the settlers on the Grants were not worried. They believed the ruling applied only to future grants. But not so New York's officials, who declared all of the New Hampshire grants were null and void. They also annexed the disputed territory to New York's existing counties. Four new counties, Charlotte in the northwest, Albany in the southwest, Gloucester to the northeast and Cumberland to the southeast—were created so that New York courts could be set up and New York sheriffs appointed to enforce New York's rights. And Lord Dunmore, the New York governor, began to issue new grants. One new township, to be named Deerfield, was chartered in 1769 and was to include "about Thirty-five Thousand Acres lying on a River called Onion River which empties itself into Lake Champlain about Forty Miles to the North of Crown Point, Beginning on the said River about eighty Chains above the first Falls in the said River which are about Nine Miles up the same as the River runs from where the River empties itself into the said Lake and to extend Easterly, Southerly and Northerly such Distances as should contain the Quantity of Thirty five Thousand Acres with the usual Allowance for Highways."

In other words, Williston.

Organizing the settlers, Ethan Allen and his brothers, who had paid good money for the land, appealed to the New York courts, which ignored them. The Allens wrote pamphlets defending the settlers' rights while the settlers raised the money to send agents to London to plead their case. The Crown in 1767 ordered New York to stop making grants to the disputed lands. But New York's governors ignored the royal order from faraway London and sent sheriffs and posses to

evict the settlers. It was at this point that the Allens organized the Green Mountain Boys to resist New York's illegal actions. By the time of the Revolution the Green Mountain Boys were the largest organized armed force in any colony in America. Allen, his brothers Heman and Ira and their cousin, Remember Baker, had the most to gain from defending other settlers and evicting the New York sheriffs' eviction parties. They also owned the Onion River Land Company. Unless they ousted the New Yorkers, their lands would be worthless. Declared outlaws by the New York government, the Green Mountain Boys acted as a provisional government, issued decrees and enforced them. In 1772 the grantees east of the Green Mountains held a convention and ordered that "no person should take grants" from New York. Up to one hundred of the Boys raided and destroyed settlements the New Yorkers attempted to plant.

In the summer of 1773, Chittenden and Major Jonathan Spafford, the second-in-command of his Connecticut militia regiment, and several of their hired men journeyed north along the trail blazed by the Allens from Castleton to the Falls of the Winooski. There was no road, only a path wide enough for a horse in summer or a man on snowshoes in winter. The path was marked by chopping away a patch of bark on the trees along the path. Chittenden and Spafford sited their claims on the shelf overlooking the intervale river valley at Williston. Dividing a 1,200-acre tract they had bought from the Allens, each built a cabin to establish his claim. And then they returned to Connecticut to gather their families, leaving workmen to make further improvements. In the spring of 1774 they set out with their wives and children, their horses and oxen and their chosen belongings. The permanent settlement of Williston took place that summer of 1774. In the spring of 1776, Chittenden and Spafford were joined by the families of Elihu Allen, Abijah Pratt and John Chamberlain. In all, there were about forty original settlers of Williston.

Concentrating on clearing the land, the first Williston settlers planted wheat and corn among the tree stumps. The

Matthew Lyon, depicted here as a heroic founder of Vermont.

crops flourished. By mid-1776, the third harvest was on the way to a stockaded warehouse across the Winooski River in Jericho. But the brief honeymoon for the Williston settlement was shattered that June. The Revolutionary War had broken out. The Green Mountain Boys had joined in the fray within days of the battles of Lexington and Concord. After seizing Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point, they had raced ahead of the Continental Congress and its troops in a foolhardy attempt to annex Canada. Ethan Allen was a prisoner in chains on a ship bound for London where he faced a treason trial and almost certain execution. Remember Baker was dead with a musketball through his head. Benedict Arnold's march up the Kennebec River to take Quebec City by sur-

Congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont, right center, brandishes fireplace tongs on the floor of the House of Representatives toward Congressman Roger Griswold in this famous 1798 clash.

prise had ended in disaster with his forces defeated and Arnold crippled. By June of 1776, the summer soldiers of 1775 were in headlong retreat, pursued by a large British army which had been rushed from England, as well as thousands of their Indian auxiliaries.

As the British assembled a fleet at St. John at the northern end of Lake Champlain and Benedict Arnold built the first American navy at Skenesborough at the southern end of the lake, the Green Mountain Boys, now subsumed in the Continental Army, obtained permission to build and hold a string of stockades, including Fort Frederick at the Falls of the Winooski and an unnamed stockade in Jericho just across the river from Thomas Chittenden's farm. But as Indian raiders struck down along the old warrior path, the 20-man Jericho garrison, resenting risking their lives to guard somebody else's grain, staged a mutiny. Their officers, including Captain Jonathan Fassett and Lieutenant Matthew Lyon,

failed to talk them out of their insubordination in negotiations in Williston. Lyon and the other officers were later courtmartialled at Fort Ticonderoga, cashiered from the army, and fined. The courtmartial awarded the fines to Williston's settlers as compensation for their losses. Lyon later was re-commissioned, became Governor Chittenden's aide, son-in-law and eventually a member of Congress.

But when the Jericho garrison absconded in July of 1776, Williston lay defenseless. Indian raiders, emboldened, attacked a Williston farm and killed and scalped John Chamberlain's hired man as well as a child. As cannon boomed during a five-day naval battle at Valcour Island, the Williston settlers buried their tools and their treasures and walked and rode back down the horse path to the south, closer to the Continental Army garrisoning Ticonderoga and Crown Point. They did not return for ten years. The new government of what began to call itself first New Connecticut and then Vermont decided that it could not provide protection for anyone farther north than a line of forts it built from Castleton through Pittsford. Settlers who attempted to stay behind at Shelburne, for example, were killed by the Indians. By 1786, with peace restored, the State of Vermont was flourishing and settlers, long pent up by war and title disputes, began to pour in. The Williston home of Vermont's enormously popular first governor, Thomas Chittenden, proved an especial magnet.

On March 28, 1786, Williston held its first Town Meeting: John Chamberlin presided as the moderator. Robert Donnelly was elected the first town clerk; Joel Brownson, the first constable. Jonathan Spafford, Deacon David Talcott and Asa Brownson were the first selectmen. Major Spafford was Williston's first representative to the Republic of Vermont's General Assembly. Solomon Miller, a lawyer newly arrived from West Springfield, Massachusetts and a veteran of the attack on Ticonderoga and the Battle of Bennington, had taken up lands comprising much of the pre-

sent-day Village of Williston. He soon took over as the town clerk. He was Williston's first lawyer. At the second town meeting, in 1787, the townspeople voted a considerable £40 to lay out new roads and improve existing ones. Two years later the width of the rights-of-way for roads was fixed at four rods. The town cemetery was established at the 1787 town meeting. To maintain these improvements, property-owners were taxed two pence on the pound, to be paid in grain. Wheat was valued at six shillings a bushel, corn at three. In 1790, Governor Chittenden was elected a selectman; his yard was designated the town pound. That same meeting, the town voted to create a second cemetery in the west part of town. That same day, as if inspired by Chittenden's participation, the town voted to build its own meeting house, of no particular denomination. The governor pledged a hefty £100 for four pews. The actual work did not begin until 1796, the year he died, delayed by the dispute in the legislature over the town's boundaries (see Chapter Four).

By this time, as New York and Vermont worked to iron out their ancient land disputes (Vermont ended up paying New York $30,000) and Vermont prepared to join the Union, settlers surged in, filling up the arable lands quickly. In 1791, when the first republic in the Western Hemisphere ceased to exist, became the fourteenth state, and belatedly took its first census, Vermont had the highest per acre yield of wheat in the nation. The unrest among overtaxed Revolutionary veterans in western Massachusetts that produced Daniel Shays' Rebellion spilled over into southern Vermont, triggering a new wave of immigration that sent settlers streaming up the Champlain shore. Williston boomed. According to that first United States census, taken when Vermont was admitted to the Union in 1791, in only five years some 471 townspeople had built 127 houses.

Early settlement followed two main roads. The town's roads were marked off in 1787. One river road followed the old Abenaki Indian path and roughly followed present-day

Mountain View Road to Governor Chittenden Road — though a long section no longer exists. But the main road was still north-south, the present Route 2A from Hinesburg and the more heavily-populated settlements to the south. As the present-day village of Williston took shape, a new road became important. In 1805, the Winooski Turnpike opened—for a toll—to provide a faster, smoother ride from Montpelier to Burlington, with a toll bridge across Muddy Brook, the Williston-Burlington boundary line established by the state legislature (see "Educating the Spirit").

Almost immediately, a shunpike was developed by smugglers who refused to pay the toll—and scrutiny of their cargoes, especially during President Thomas Jefferson's hated embargo of 1807-1808. By 1808, too, the first bridge spanning the Winooski River to present-day Essex Junction was built—a floating bridge at Hubbells' Falls near the site of the present power house. It survived until the January, 1830 flood. The river was first dammed by Abram Stevens for the Onion River Land Company in the early 1770's. It was washed away with the spring runoff in 1778. A new dam was constructed in 1799 farther east than the present dam. John Johnson and Samuel Hurlburt built sawmills nearby. A fire destroyed these mills in 1814 and destroyed the dam, but in 1815 Henry Teachout rebuilt the dam to serve grist and hemp mills. All of this was swept away by the 1830 freshet along with the floating bridge downstream. But a new dam was immediately created and a high wooden covered bridge spanned the river for the first time. It connected Williston and Essex for nearly a century until it was swept away in the 1927 flood. A grist mill and sawmills flanked that bridge. The dam held until 1913 when Green Mountain Power Company bought out the Brownell family's interest in the water rights and built a new high dam and power station.

At the turn of the nineteenth century in Williston, it was hard to escape the sound of axes. As new settlers poured in and cut clearings in the forest for their homesites, they were

Williston Road looking east toward Elisha Miller, Jr.'s house. Maple Hill, near intersection with modern-day Industrial Highway, was demolished circa 1960. Note use of virgin treeroots as fences along road.

almost constantly felling trees to build their houses and barns, warm their hearths and cook their meals. The thump of axe on treetrunk resonated through the winter woods as the settlers chopped down the tall trees and stacked the logs along the banks of the river and the streams until the ice softened and the logs could be urged into the water toward the sawmills. The John Johnson map of 1834 shows seven sawmills, not only on the Winooski but the Miller family sawmill on Muddy Brook, two mills on Allen Brook, and one near Old Stage Road. Almost every year in the 1790's, at least one new mill appeared on the grand list. Giles Chittenden, son of the governor, owned interests in two sawmills and a grist mill by 1798. But every farm was its own little cottage industry and timber its main cash crop. The trees yielded not only planks but the scrap branches were burned and the ashes cooked in great iron kettles into potash, whose value soared as the natural British market in Canada was declared off-limits under Jefferson's embargo of 1807-08 and then the War of 1812. At night, black-painted vessels full of the forbidden potash were pulled by ropes and poled along the Winooski toward Hubbell's Falls and their cargoes transferred to sleek, fast boats that spirited them past Federal patrol boats and out onto Lake Champlain for the illicit sail to Canada. There a ton of potash fetched $300 by the time the unpopular embargo ended with Jefferson's time in office. The price had gone up twelve-fold in only ten years.

The Williston settlers did not waste any of the wood: as they cleared the forests at first they planted their houses and their crops among the great tree stumps. Eventually, with the help of their oxen, they grubbed out the gnarled treeroots and used them as fences to demarcate their property lines. A new breed of workhorse perfect for the loggers in the winter woods as well as for riding and carriages appeared in Williston in 1794—and stayed. The story of how the famed Morgan horse came to Vermont can be traced back to North Salem, New York, before the Revolution, where Dr. Samuel Allen, one of

This house on Mountain View Road was built in 1802 by Samuel Aaron Brownell. Bought by the Martel family in 1913, it is shown here in the 1950's before it underwent extensive renovations following a fire in the 1980's.

Williston's original grantees, admired a stallion owned by James DeLancey, one of the Hudson River patroons who owned a vast estate. DeLancey's stallion was named True Briton, as was DeLancey himself as he pranced off on the fine mount at the head of his Loyalist cavalry unit, the West Chester Light Horse, to fight at the side of the British. The "Cowboys," as they became known, were notorious for stealing the cattle of Whig farmers to feed the British troops in New York City. True Briton was really an early cow pony. True Briton sired a new American mixed breed horse that was short and strong. Colonel DeLancey's son, Stephen, also a Loyalist, evidently parted with the animal around the time of the Revolution: whether he sold it when he emigrated to the Bahamas at war's end or during the war when DeLancey was captured is unclear, but True Briton's son, Figure, appeared in Vermont in the early 1790's in the possession of Justin Morgan, an impecunious music teacher from Massachusetts.

Two sons of Williston proprietors who had moved from North Salem apparently instantly recognized Figure when Justin Morgan arrived. An advertisement in the *Rutland Herald* in May of 1795 reads:

> Figure will cover this season at the stable of Samuel Allen in Williston.... Figure sprang from a curious horse owned by Col. DeLancey of New York but the greatest recommendation I can give him is, he is exceedingly sure, and gets curious colts.

The ad, signed by Justin Morgan, was dated Williston, April 30, 1795. Allen kept Figure at stud all through the 1795 season at his Muddy Brook farm. The next season, Allen advertised as Figure's proprietor. He had bought the first Morgan horse for twenty acres of land in Moretown. Crowds came to see the breeding ritual in the pens outside Peter Benedict's tavern. On February 29, 1796, the *Burlington Mercury* announced:

> Figure will cover this season at the stable of Peter Benedict, Esquire . . . . at 12 shillings the leap—4 dollars the season—and six dollars to ensure a foal . . . He is high spirited and remarkably good-natured . . . . His colts has proved fine. Good pasturing for mares, and constant attendance by Samuel Allen. N.B. The pay will be expected next January, in cash or any kind of country produce.

Figure, eventually renamed Justin Morgan in honor of its first owner, became known as "the Morgan horse" and initiated the entire breed of Morgan horses. This short, strong horse, which could maneuver better and last longer in winter woods or on a battlefield, became famous as a carriage horse. The entire Vermont First Cavalry rode off to the Civil War on the descendants of that Williston horse, Justin Morgan.

One immediate result of the introduction of the Morgan horse was that, when Williston was ordered to form its own company of militia in 1798, Governor Chittenden's son, Colonel Giles Chittenden organized the Williston Troop of Light Horse. As war appeared imminent with revolutionary France, President John Adams ordered that twelve new regiments of troops be raised and trained. Adams appointed retired President George Washington as commander-in-chief again and, in the summer of 1798, Williston's new cavalry troops drilled on Williston Road. The war scare dissipated but the Grand List for 1801-1802 shows that the cavalry's horses were exempted from taxation.

The Williston militia was not reactivated until the War of 1812, when 4,000 Federal troops were billeted in Burlington and Vermont's militia crossed the Lake to join New Yorkers in resisting the latest invasion from Canada by the British. In 1814, a second generation Chittenden, Giles's brother Martin, was governor of Vermont. This Chittenden worried about the constitutionality of sending militia outside the state. Shortly after Commodore James McDonough and his U.S. naval squadron defeated the British navy at the Battle of Plattsburgh in September of 1813, Governor Giles Chittenden, as commander-in-chief of Vermont's militia, issued a proclamation recalling the Third Vermont Brigade back to Vermont soil but the soldiers refused to abandon the Federal cause.

There were numerous casualties of the War of 1812 in Vermont. Late in 1812, spotted fever, with typhus-like symptoms, broke out in the Burlington barracks. Sick soldiers were ordered quarantined in outlying towns. During the winter of 1812-13, a terrible epidemic raged through northern Vermont. Fatalities reached a peak in December when 150 men died in the Burlington barracks. By spring, fully 250 men had died of the violent and highly contagious form of pneumonia. Years later, after a spring freshet, a schoolteacher at the Muddy Brook district school in Williston noticed that the receding

Isaac Morse's tavern at Taft's Corner was one of two hostelries at the cross-roads when this picture was taken a century ago.

waters had laid bare several jutting human bones. Two dozen bodies, probably of the wartime epidemic, were disinterred and reburied with full military honors in the small graveyard near the airport. The marker, dedicated by the Daughters of 1812, Commodore MacDonough Chapter, reads:

> Near this spot lie buried twenty-four soldiers of the War of 1812 who died of smallpox while waiting the call to action.

In the first decade of the Nineteenth Century, Williston's rapid growth continued. Population rose from 471 in 1791 to 1,185 in 1810—nearly a 300% increase. Only neighboring Hinesburg had a higher population in Chittenden County—but barely, by only 53 residents. Williston was the fastest-growing town in Vermont. In addition to farming, Williston was becoming a manufacturing center. As sheep-raising was introduced, carding and fulling mills appeared. There were tanneries on Muddy Brook, and, in the Talcottville district, mechanics' shops. The Grand Lists show there were more than 100 mechanics and artisans by 1800: blacksmiths, tanners (and as a result) saddlers and shoemakers, wheelwrights and brick makers. Blacksmithing shops had to be built of brick for safety. Making potash was too sporadic for John Washburn; he turned his talents to distilling whisky from the corn and rye. Eventually, there were thirty distilleries. Many merchants owned interests in them and accepted grain in payment of debts. Seven taverns dotted the township's edges, along the stagecoach routes and especially at the crossroads. At Tafts' Corners, there were two taverns, Morse's and French's. Isaac Morton kept a tavern on the road to Hinesburg near the new Wal-Mart. But at the heart of the village, more and more substantial homes were being built, and their centerpiece was a fine coaching hotel, the Eagle. In the summer of 1826, the Eagle received its most famous guest, the Marquis de Lafayette, who stopped enroute to

Burlington, where he was to lay the cornerstone for the Old Mill building at the University of Vermont and meet Governor Noyes (see "Celebrations").

By this time, too, Williston was emerging as a serious contender for the most important town in Chittenden County. But many Vermonters were leaving to migrate farther west because the forests had mostly been clearcut and little unsettled land was still available. Many heads of families followed the new Erie Canal to the raw new towns springing up along the Erie Canal. After twenty years of clearcutting the forests, when heavy rains hit in two consecutive years—1816 and 1817—there was severe runoff of the state's topsoil. Gradually, Vermont's agriculture changed to the grazing of livestock. But sheep needed vast acreage and this crowded out the small-scale farmer. Many simply sold out and headed west again. But this was not the case in Williston. Both farming and industry became more diversified. The rich intervale soil provided good general farming. Farmers prospered and reinvested in more land and in other businesses. The 1829 Grand List reveals a new level of wealth: four families owned carriages. Diversified farming reached its peak between 1825 and 1850. By 1829, the sheep craze swept Vermont and Williston provided wool for the textile mills of the Winooski River Valley and the Connecticut River Valley. And because of their rich soil, farmers could profit handsomely by providing their livestock with grain they had grown themselves instead of handing over much of their profits for feed. Zadock Thompson's 1842 *History of Vermont* described Williston as

> a very fine farming township. The surface is diversified but not mountainous. The soil is a rich loam, of a black or yellow color, and produces abundant crops . . . . Williston contains nine school districts, six sawmills, four stores, 2 taverns [sic] and two tanneries . . . . U.S. Census statistics of 1840: Horses, 421; cattle, 2,054; sheep, 3035; swine, 1,465; wheat,

Timbers and planks cut at the sawmill at upper left helped build this covered bridge between Essex Junction and Williston over the Winooski River at Hubbell's Falls, site of the Green Mountain Power Co. dam visible from Interstate 89.

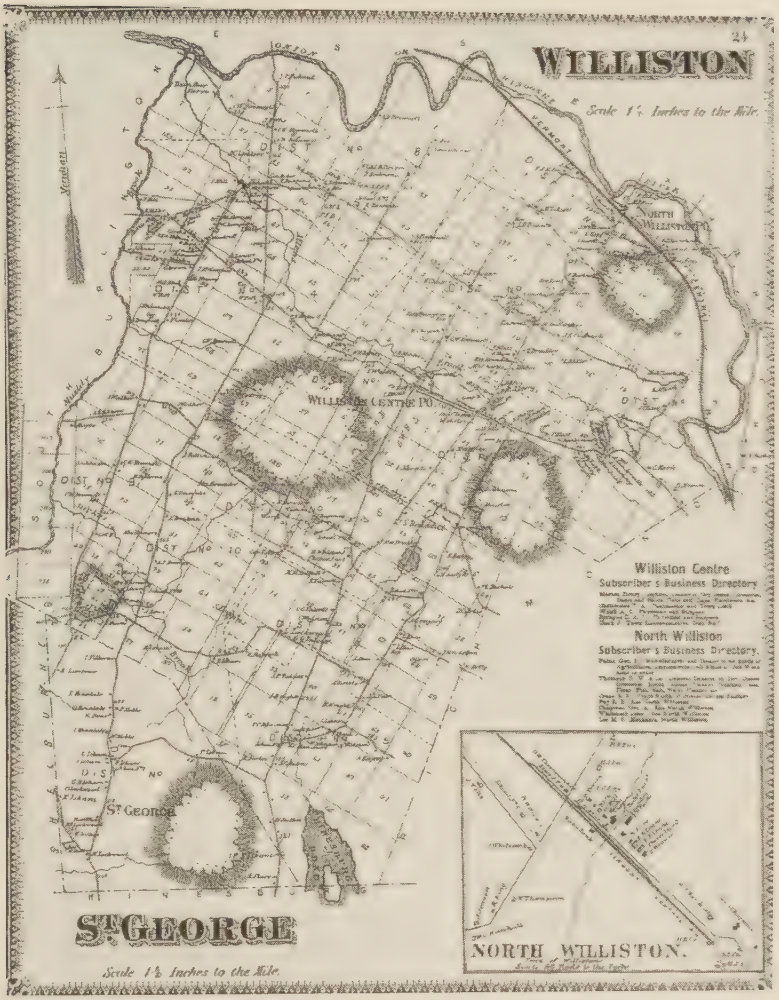
bushels, 2,726; barley, 40; oats, 19,976; rye, 2,064; buckwheat, 406; Indian corn, 7,526; potatoes, 42,529; hay, tons, 4,926; sugar, lbs., 13,167; wool, 23,128. Population, 1554."

In other words, farm animals outnumbered people by about five to one and, more and more, laborers had to be imported from Montreal and from New York City where they immigrated from Europe. Many of these immigrants stayed and eventually bought farms; still more moved farther west to homestead on cheap Federal lands or find jobs in the new cities opened up by the canal-building era.

As Williston grew, farmers were able to diversify even further as they produced crops for the Burlington market. The 1850 Town Report shows that the main crops were potatoes, oats, corn, wheat and rye in that order. In addition, considerable harvests of hay and maple sugar gave farmers a twelve-month economy. By 1850, some 8,600 sheep were grazing within the township, about five sheep to each citizen.

As the town prospered, its citizens shelled out their income, if somewhat reluctantly, for schools, churches, more impressive houses, more luxury. By the 1840's Chauncey Brownell, who had grown up in a crowded little one and half story farmhouse on Mountain View Road, had purchased a spacious brick home, rode around in a buggy pulled by a Morgan horse, had the first piano in a private home in Williston and sent his children to private schools (see "Williston Family Album"). Local society evolved not only around the churches and the homesteads but spilled over onto the "floating" floor of the Eagle Tavern's ballroom. The handsome wood Williston Academy drew students from as far away as Pennsylvania where they and their visiting families mixed with Williston's rising middle class.

As if to confirm its new importance, leading Williston citizens made several abortive attempts in the General Assembly to have new county buildings located in the village, including a new country grammar school to replace its dilapi-



The Beers map of 1869 shows the township of Williston with North Williston inset at the lower right.

dated one-room district schools. In the 1830's there was also a movement to split off a new county from Chittenden County—to include Hinesburg, Huntington and Richmond—with Williston as its county seat. But every attempt to raise Williston's status received terse treatment in the state legislature.

Williston, with its peak Nineteenth Century population of 1,669 in 1850, was deemed important enough to warrant a stop and a sizable station on the new Central Vermont railroad. Construction along the south side of the Winooski River took three years but by 1850 the locomotive "Ethan Allen" was belching soot and wailing its warning as it approached the new station in North Williston. The arrival of the railroad wrought rapid changes in Williston. Dairy products and produce could now be shipped to distant markets. New creameries sprang up, fields were flooded and dammed to produce ice that could chill milk and cheese. Farms cut up their pond ice, stored it in spring houses full of sawdust and used it to cool the tins of milk. After the invention of the cheese separator, cheese factories became more profitable. As the creameries proliferated, Williston cheese was exported to the Boston market. Large farms were more successful and, after 1860, butter that was packed in ice and shipped to other towns and cities became more lucrative than cheese. Creameries opened on Oak Hill Road, in Williston Village and in North Williston. The innovations in cold storage and rapid transportation to faraway markets led to further diversification, including the rise of a poultry industry.

The year 1850 was a turning point for Williston. The railroad came but the large and luxurious Eagle Hotel, long a Williston landmark owned by merchant James Hurlburt, where four-and-six-horse carriage teams stopped frequently so that horses and drivers could spend the night in comfort, burned to the ground. Eli Chittenden, grandson of Thomas Chittenden, summed up Williston's sense of loss: "It was one of the best hotels in the country." The land was eventually to become the site of the Federated Church. An era of prosperity was about to be replaced by a new age that the rest of the world was coming to call the Industrial Revolution.

No trace remains today of the industrial village that developed along the railroad tracks and was called North Williston—even having its own post office for nearly eighty years—that came and eventually disappeared with the addi-

North Williston in 1869.

tion and elimination of such a simple-seeming thing as a stop along the railroad. Towns served by railroads flourished after 1850, but if the railroad never came, or passed a town by, chances are it withered and died. For nearly a century, Hinesburg had been more important than Williston and, for a time, outshone even Burlington. But the Central Vermont Railroad missed Hinesburg, and an attempt to build a Burlington and Hinesburg railroad ran afoul of the Civil War and died. So did Hinesburg. Yet along the Winooski riverfront of Williston, where there had only been a bridge to Jericho and where today there is only a blinking light and some empty lots, there was, from the arrival of the railroad in 1850 until the last train stop nearly a century later, a boomtown that gave Williston new wealth and a stronger tax base.

Smith Wright

Between 1850 and 1860, the Central Vermont built a passenger station and railroad freight depot. In 1860, a covered bridge spanned the Winooski. By 1862, Hiram Fay built a steam sawmill. In 1866, he took two partners, expanded the sawmill and built a gristmill alongside it. Much of the passenger traffic in the early 1860's was soldiers leaving or returning from the Civil War. After the war, the railroad helped to resuscitate Williston Academy (see "Educating the Mind"). In the postwar boom, North Williston got its own school. In 1865, a post office opened in Frederick Simonds' new general store. Simonds was the first postmaster. The pace quick-

ened in 1868 when E. R. Crane built a cheese factory and Paine & Brown opened a foundry to make iron castings. (The foundry failed after only one year.) A second disaster struck in 1871 when Fay's sawmills burned down, but the resourceful Fay took new partners, formed the North Williston Mill Company, rebuilt and enlarged his operations.

That same year, 1868, Smith Wright, a large-scale raiser of poultry at Smith's Falls in Ontario Province, Canada, built a poultry warehouse in North Williston as well as a cold storage plant refrigerated with ice from two and three-acre Williston ponds. The first cold storage plant enabled shipments of fresh chicken to Boston. One day in 1883, Wright made a $43,000 single poultry sale and delivery of 50,000 chickens, reputedly the largest single sale in the United States up to that time. In 1886, Wright admitted his three sons into the partnership under the style of Smith Wright and Sons. For several years they were the largest dealers in frozen poultry in the United States; in addition, they carried on a large trade in eggs and butter. They were the first to introduce the method of holding butter by freezing. Their exper-

Smith Wright's office

North Williston Station on the Vermont Central railroad line at the turn of the cent

iments demonstrated that freezing butter was far superior to storing it in cold storage and sawdust. The Wrights revolutinized the poultry and butter markets and made Williston an important shipping center. The poultry business thrived until it was badly weakened by President William McKinley's protective tariff in 1897. As early as 1879, Wright had built the first commercial refrigerator, for the next fifteen years storing for other packers as well as himself.

In the 1870's, North Williston continued to grow rapidly. Hiram Fay opened a machine shop that manufactured chair stock. Wilkins & Loggins produced butter tubs: this plant flourished for seventeen years. John Whitcomb took over the grist mill, the lumber business, the general store and the post office. The industrial town thrived into the new century, right on through World War I, but a series of calamities struck in the 1920's. The covered bridge to Jericho was swept away in 1923 by the ice breakup. The 1927 flood wiped out fifteen miles

The North Williston Mill Co.

of railroad track. Smith Wright's cold storage plant declined after 1929. There appeared to be a recovery when H. P. Hood & Sons built a large creamery in 1924 but it closed thirteen years later during the Great Depression. Roswell Brown's grist mill, built by Hiram Fay in 1866, went out of business in 1934. There followed a litany of dying businesses; W. S. Johnson's grain dealership closed in 1941. By the end of World War II, the United States government stripped North Williston of its post office and Smith Wright's pioneering storage plant burned down. By the late 1940's, the general store closed and the railroad cancelled freight service and tore down its station. The last creamery was demolished. And finally, the district school closed its doors when Williston Central School opened. North Williston once again was just a farming community—with memories of a century's industrial growth.

Simonds' General Store

CHAPTER TWO

Thomas Chittenden:

Founding Father

THOMAS CHITTENDEN, the founding father of Vermont, would have lived the comfortable life of an English country squire had not religious persecution driven his family from their homeland. Chittenden's forebears were part of the country gentry of the shire of Kent in the southeast of England. Today, it would be called a "county family," part of that second tier of the English aristocracy that went to Oxford and Cambridge to learn how to defend its property and its status. The Chittendens were one of the leading families of the cathedral town of Cranbrook, a manufacturing town of some 4,000, about thirty-five miles southeast of London.

The roots of the Chittenden family's prosperity lay in the woolen broadcloth industry. For three centuries Cranbrook, with its fast streams and proximity to London, had grown as a center for processing wool, England's leading export. The Chittendens, whose name first appeared in English records in the mid-Thirteen Century, were millers who processed wool at their fulling mills powered by water collected in their mill dams.

According to records of the Parish of Marden near Cranbrook, William Chittenden, the son of Robert, and the great-great-grandfather of the founder of Vermont, was baptized into the Church of England in March of 1594. Little is known about his early life but in 1630, he married Joanna Sheafe, the daughter of Edmund Sheafe, a wealthy clothier from Cranbrook.

When the religious wars of the Counter-Reformation swept over Europe in the 1630's, William Chittenden became an artillery officer in the British Army. Fighting in the Netherlands in the Thirty Years' War, he rose to the rank of major.

When he returned to England, he could find no peace at home. King Charles I had given the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, permission to carry out a "root and branch" purge of the Church of England to rid it of any dissenters. Secret Puritans like the Chittendens were prime targets of this religious purge: they for their part wanted to see the state church rid of priests, incense, tithes and titles. In their corner of England, where the Puritans were the most numerous, gentry like the Chittendens sponsored clandestine "lectures" and hid their ministers in secret rooms in their houses to avoid the prying eyes of ecclesiastical police. Laud's agents were everywhere; the punishments were severe. Puritans were branded, their ears cropped, their properties seized. They could no longer hold public offices, army posts or clerical appointments and the universities were closed to their sons under Laud's policy of "thorough."

William and Joanna Chittenden joined these religious rebels, at least in part because Joanna's cousin, Dorothy, was married to the Reverend Henry Whitfield, a leader of the Puritan reform movement in England. Puritan separatists met in secret in Whitfield's manse in Ockley, Surrey. Among their number were many of the leaders of the radical reform movement, including the Reverend Thomas Hooker, founder of Connecticut, Reverend John Davenport, founder of New

Haven Colony and the Reverend John Cotton, who became a leading Puritan preacher in Massachusetts.

After Archbishop Laud hauled Whitfield before the state Court of High Commission for an ecclesiastical trial in the Star Chamber in London on charges of nonconforming to the liturgy of the state religion, Whitfield decided to resign his parish and organize a company of Puritan dissenters to emigrate to New England, where Davenport had already gone to plant a colony along the Quinnipiack at present-day New Haven.

Among the twenty-five families Whitfield assembled were the Chittendens: Joanna was joined by two sisters and a brother and by her widowed mother. Whitfield's followers were "not rich still they were not poor," all of them "persons of property and good education and culture."

The persecutions had gone on for ten years by the year 1639 when the Chittendens decided to leave England and migrate to the New World. For years, Puritans had been selling all they owned and crowding onto small vessels for the two-to-four month ocean voyage. Some 15,000 Puritans had filled up the coastal towns of Massachusetts and spilled over into Connecticut, where the Reverend Thomas Hooker had founded a strict Puritan community. William Chittenden at age forty-five decided he would cast his lot with the sober society of religious zealots. He joined in a covenant with twenty-four other devout Puritans from Kent, Surrey and Sussex. They were determined to found a new religious colony within Connecticut. On May 20, 1639, they sailed from London on the 350-ton ship *St. John*. Ten days out at sea they signed this covenant:

> We, whose names are here underwritten, intending by God's gracious permission to plant ourselves in New England, and if it may be, in the southerly part about Quinnipiack, do faithfully promise each, for ourselves and our families, and

> those that belong to us, that we will, the Lord assisting us, sit down and join ourselves together in one entire plantation and be helpful to each other in any common work, according to every man's ability and as need shall require; and we promise not to desert or leave each other or the plantation but with the consent of the rest, or the greater part of the company who have entered into this engagement.

The covenant became a family credo for the Chittendens.

Their safe arrival at New Haven after a seven week crossing was considered somewhat of a miracle since there was no professional navigator on board and no ship had ever sailed directly from England to New Haven. The boatload of pilots sent out to bring the ship into port had given up after two weeks of watchful waiting. The leader of the New Haven community, the Reverend Davenport, was especially anxious because his son was on board. When the ship anchored safely the night of July 10, 1639, in the Quinnipiack River without the assistance of a harbor pilot, Rev. Davenport proclaimed their safe arrival a miracle. He wrote back to England that it was "the first ship that ever cast anchor in this place." The ship had come in "guided by God's own hand to our town." Major Chittenden and the other covenanters were cheered and prayed over at a public day set aside by decree for "extraordinary humiliation by fasting and prayer." Then they set out for the frontier where they were granted the town of Guilford. They purchased the lands from Shaumpishush, sachem squaw of the Pequod chief Mehunkatuch, on September 29, 1639. Chittenden and his companions staked out "a tract of land resembling that from which they had removed," Benjamin Trumbull wrote in his history of Connecticut. They "made their settlement on low, moist, rich land liberal indeed to the husbandman." It was a formula for successful pioneering the Chittendens would follow

again and again. Chittenden was one of four men who accompanied Whitfield in the land negotiations with the Indians and he was one of five men who held the new plantation in trust for the entire community. The first Chittenden in America immediately became a public official.

As one of the original shareholders, he purchased nearly one hundred acres of woods and meadows, including a three-acre riverfront homesite, once described as "the most charming" in the new settlement. But it was still a raw settlement of hastily constructed log houses on the edge of the frontier. Major Chittenden was assigned its defense. Chittenden also served as one of the first magistrates of Guilford. According to a family historian, Chittenden was "a man of ability and influence" who "filled many important offices" in the new colony. He was one of four given "full power and authority to act, order and dispatch all matters respecting the public weal and civil dispatch of the plantation until a church is gathered among us." He served as a magistrate for four years until the colony-wide church court was founded that controlled all of the towns' civil as well as religious affairs.

Remaining the military leader of Guilford, he put aside his major's rank and took the new rank of the colony's "lieutenant" as well as his judgeship. In addition, he became artillery officer for the entire New Haven colony. After the colonies of Guilford and New Haven merged, he became one of Guilford's delegates to the General Court of New Haven. He served in this representative assembly from 1646 until his death in February of 1660 at age 67. Many of his fellow covenanters had gone back to England to fight beside Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil Wars, but Chittenden had started a new life in the New World. Like his neighbors, he raised peas, beans, wheat, Indian corn, hops and fruit on land he hacked and grubbed out of the wilderness. He introduced livestock from England: horses, oxen, cows, sheep, goats and hogs. From the beef, pork and dairy products he sold he accu-

mulated a sizable estate. Chittenden left, in addition to twenty-three acres in Guilford, some £677.16 shillings 7 pence, a substantial fortune for the time.

He left his home and adjoining land to his oldest son, Thomas, great-grandfather of Vermont's first governor. This second-generation American married Joanna Jordan, daughter of another signer of the shipboard Guilford Compact, in 1663. They had seven children. Their second son, William, Governor Chittenden's grandfather, was one of two sons who married and was thus entitled under the terms of his father's will to a half of the family's dwindling land. William remained in Guilford; he and his wife Hannah gave birth to a son, Ebenezer, the father of Governor Chittenden, on August 31, 1699.

By this time the Chittenden family faced a problem which was becoming commonplace in New England: their inheritances did not provide enough arable farmland to support their families. The fourth generation of Chittendens had to move again. This time a Chittenden helped to found a new settlement called East Guilford (now Madison), just across the East River. Here, Ebenezer Chittenden was "prosperous in business and a prominent man in the community." On March 21, 1723, he married Mary Johnson, the daughter of Deacon Samuel Johnson of the First Congregational Church of Guilford. They had ten children; seven lived long lives. Ebenezer held several civil and militia offices and was an elected member of Connecticut's General Court for twenty-five years.

Their second son, Thomas, the founder of Williston, Vermont, was born in East Guilford on January 6, 1730. Growing up in the Neck area of East Guilford, he attended the East End school, within easy walking distance. Every Connecticut child was required by law to learn to read and write and do simple arithmetic. He was at least as well educated as his three brothers, who went to school with him. One of them, Ebenezer, became a famous silversmith in New

Haven. Another became a noted clockmaker in Salisbury, where he was a militia officer and town official. Both had to run their own businesses and keep accounts. A younger brother, Bethuel, became an Anglican priest and founded the first Episcopal church in Vermont, in the town of Shelburne.

From his father, Thomas Chittenden also learned to farm, but he was restless. While his distinguished Puritan lineage, so important to New Englanders, guaranteed him public offices and a good life, as a young man he did not relish the monotony of farming. He was seventeen in 1748 when England declared war on France and Spain. Far to the south, in Virginia, a farm boy named George Washington was chafing for military service as were young boys all over America. For the first time, in King George's War, Americans were being recruited to fight in the royal forces. As redcoated recruiting sergeants with their fifes and drums visited every town Thomas Chittenden enlisted in the crew of a privateersman, an armed merchant ship, and sailed toward the Caribbean where England and Spain were vying for control of the lucrative sugar and silver ports. Had they captured enemy shipping, young Thomas would have been entitled to a share of the prize money from the sale of the ship and its cargo.

Little can be documented about the incident, but according to family and local tradition, Chittenden's ship clashed with a French privateer on its first voyage and was defeated in a sea fight in which Chittenden, according to persistent family legend, lost the sight in his left eye as well as all his belongings. His ship was seized as a prize-of-war and its surviving crew members dumped on an island with no money or food. Almost a year after he had left home, Chittenden managed somehow to get back to East Guilford. He was content to spend the rest of his life on land. On October 4, 1749, at age nineteen, he married Elizabeth Meigs, seventeen, the daughter of John and Elizabeth Meigs of East Guilford.

Once again, it was time for a Chittenden to head west, this time to start a farm in the northwest frontier county of

Litchfield. Connecticut was fast becoming the most crowded mainland American colony. Since he had been born, its population had nearly doubled. Young Thomas Chittenden was feeling the pinch. If he stayed in East Guilford and had sons and divided his land, they would not be able to support themselves by farming. The young couple packed up all their belongings and headed for the latest frontier.

Thomas and his father had visited the new town of Salisbury and decided to invest in land there. Father Ebenezer bought a half-share in a 162-acre property that included a small farmhouse and barn a few miles north of Salisbury. Thomas and Elizabeth moved into this small house right after their marriage. Almost immediately, Thomas was elected one of the town listers—at nineteen. Soon afterward, his sister, Elisheba, and brother-in-law, Sylvanus Evarts, also moved to Salisbury. Eventually, brothers Timothy and Bethuel followed them.

Thomas and Elizabeth's first of ten children, Mabel, was born October 7, 1750. Remarkably for the times, all ten children would survive infancy. At that year's town meeting, Thomas was elected surveyor of roads. His father bought out some of his partner's Salisbury land and, when Thomas turned twenty-one, deeded all his property in the area to his son

> in consideration of Love, Good Will and Affection to my Loving Son, Thomas Chittenden, for and towards his advancement in the world, accounting it to the value of £550 . . . toward his part of my estate.

As Thomas and Elizabeth's family grew (three more children were born in the 1750's), he bought land adjoining his farm until, by 1760, he had the seventh-largest landholdings in Salisbury.

Elected in 1756 as town constable, Chittenden doubled as tax collector. In rapid succession, he was elected to the

town's school committee, then selectman and then as tithingman, officially responsible for church discipline—in and outside the Congregational meeting house. To be chosen to this office, Thomas Chittenden must have been considered a strict disciplinarian and exemplary Puritan. A Puritan father, if he thoroughly espoused the self-righteousness of his patriarchal religion, was supposed to teach his children that they would be damned to eternal agony unless they unquestioningly followed the teachings of an unflinchingly stern God. All knowledge, all that was essential to salvation, was found in the Bible and the Sabbath sermon and was to be obeyed without interpretation. There was, as in the Old Testament, a rubric for every good act, a prohibition for every bad one. The Bible was the civil law of Connecticut; the General Court enforced it. The brother of one Puritan divine anguished over whittling behind a closed door on the Sabbath; young lovers got into trouble for sitting idly under a tree on the Lord's Day.

As a symbol of stern paternalism, Thomas Chittenden, tithingman, was elected to keep watch over every household in Salisbury. It was his duty "to present the names of all single persons that live outside family government (bachelors paid annual fines), stubborn and disorderly children, and servants, nightwalkers, tipplers, Sabbath breakers by night or day, and such as absent themselves from public worship—or whatever else tending to debauchery, irreligion, profaneness and atheism amongst us." To children, he was supposed to be a terrifying specter. Although there is no recorded instance of a child's execution on the county's public gallows, a mainstay of Puritan theology was John Calvin's dictum that "those who violate parental authority by contempt or rebellion are not men but monsters. Therefore the Lord commands all those who are disobedient to their parents to be put to death."

When Thomas Chittenden was not checking up on the conduct of apprentice boys and servant girls, he was conspicuously on duty in the Salisbury Congregational Church (only the one state religion was tolerated). Rising from his pew, it

was his duty to march down the aisle to prod with the tithingman's staff of office anyone who whispered or nodded off. The staff had a cudgel on one end and a rabbit's foot on the other to suit the infraction. Chittenden was by definition a figure of respect if not fear. The church was also a social and business club; exclusion meant ostracism from the community and the end to any chance at prosperity. Even family quarrels could bring fifteen years of probation: fifteen years of the tithingman's visits, of prying questions asked before the entire congregation and dissected in hour-long sermons. Chittenden's children would most assuredly do all they could to avoid his disapproval. Puritan childhood was a constant struggle to avoid the expected fall back into depravity or, at least, the censure of a father with a wrathful God on his side.

Thomas Chittenden's official roles were sometimes at odds with each other. He also became respected as a negotiator. In 1763 and 1771, he was elected by the town's voters to be the town's agent in securing new highways into burgeoning Salisbury from colony officials. Also in 1771 he was selected to serve on a committee to settle the large tax debt owed the town by one of its prominent citizens, surely a sensitive assignment.

Advancing meanwhile from third to second to first selectman, in 1763, during the French and Indian War, he was elected to serve as the captain of the town's militia company, its highest rank. The next year, 1764, he was chosen for the first time as one of the town's two delegates to the colony's General Assembly: he was re-elected six times by 1772, riding each year to the capital for legislative sessions.

By the time he decided once again to pull up stakes and move farther west, he had been a public official for twenty-five years, ten of them in the Connecticut legislature. He was one of Connecticut's most experienced and respected public officials. By 1765, he was a third-generation member of Connecticut's General Court, colonel of the county's militia and the father of ten children. He served in every session of

the General Court from his election in 1765 until he decided to leave Connecticut and migrate, like each generation of Chittendens, farther westward into the forested Valley of the Winooski in a place called the New Hampshire Grants. With his brother-in-law, John Evarts, Chittenden rode off to assembly meetings where he became known as a leading citizen of Connecticut.

He continued in the family tradition of holding military as well as civil office, advancing steadily from captain of Salisbury's militia to colonel of the Litchfield County militia. When the legislature reorganized Connecticut's militia at its October, 1767, session, it created a separate regiment for the western counties. Thomas Chittenden was appointed regimental major, the number three post. Little more than two years later, in May, 1770, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel, second-in-command of the Fourteenth Regiment. Five years later, he was honored again when the General Assembly appointed him as a justice of the peace for sprawling Litchfield County. The combined offices made him a leader of Connecticut's country gentry.

After ten years of farming in western Connecticut, by 1760 Thomas Chittenden was a wealthy landowner. That year's Salisbury town records show that the £130 in taxes he paid was the seventh highest in town. He was still buying up Salisbury land as the nature of farming in Connecticut evolved. Farmers like Chittenden were shifting from labor intensive, and only marginally profitable, tilling to the grazing of livestock. In other colonies and on British-owned Caribbean islands the market was growing for cattle, horses and other livestock. The demand for butter and cheese was also pulling exports from Litchfield County. But this form of agriculture demanded more and more land if Chittenden's farms were to continue to prosper. Town records show that Chittenden was busily buying and selling land throughout the 1760s. He sold at least £1,000 in land during that period, giving him the assets for further land investments.

All through the 1760's, the Chittenden family continued to grow. Four more children—Elizabeth on February 17, 1761; Beulah on May 23, 1763; Martin on March 12, 1766 and Giles on July 30, 1768—were born. The Chittendens moved to a large new brick house on the road to Prospect Hill. While it gave them a fine view of the surrounding countryside, the Chittendens, like so many of their New England neighbors, could also see that they owned—or hoped to own—nowhere near enough land to divide among their children in such a way that their children and their children's children could cling to their gentry status, much less support themselves.

For years, as Connecticut filled up, its citizens had looked forward to (and fought for) the day when they could lay claim to the rich lands to the West so long held by the French and their Indian allies. In November, 1761, shortly after the French withdrew from their Champlain Valley forts and were defeated in Canada in the Seven Years War, Chittenden's brother-in-law, John Evarts, began to buy up land in present-day Vermont. Evarts, a tavern keeper, had ridden north in 1760 to survey new town sites along Otter Creek. He and a partner staked out three towns, marking off for themselves more than 100,000 acres. In November, 1761, Evarts secured charters for the new towns—he named them Middlebury, New Haven and Salisbury—from Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire. By this time Chittenden had obviously turned his mind to land speculation in present-day Vermont. He was one of the original proprietors of Middlebury, attending the first meeting of proprietors at brother-in-law Evarts' tavern in Salisbury. Chittenden also bought a share for his eight-year-old son, Noah. His brothers, Timothy and Bethuel, bought proprietary shares in Salisbury and New Haven.

But Thomas Chittenden might never have come to Vermont if it hadn't been for an Abenaki raid on northwestern Connecticut. When the Indians took captives and headed back toward their base on the St. Francis River in Quebec

Province, Chittenden led his militia in pursuit. Whether he succeeded in overtaking the Indians as they hurried through the Winooski River Valley is unknown but, as the rescue party returned to Connecticut in their canoes, they camped overnight on a ledge at present-day Williston. From the spot, he could see Camel's Hump on his right, Mount Mansfield on his left, the meandering Winooski below him. The soil was rich, the forests filled with tall virgin hardwoods: oak, hard pine, walnut, chestnut. "It was a paradise," Chittenden wrote in 1764. He vowed that "if the time comes that I can get a title, this upland and intervale shall be mine." Like an Old Testament patriarch, he added, "Here will I build my home and my sons shall be settled around me."

For nearly ten years, as New York and New Hampshire contested the jurisdiction to the land and their royal governors issued conflicting claims and patents, Chittenden could not hope to get clear title. Meanwhile, a royal proclamation in 1763 forbade further white settlement west of the ridge of the Appalachian Mountains, closing the frontier. One result was that every acre of Connecticut's rocky soil was becoming crowded: it was already the most densely populated English mainland colony. The population of Salisbury had doubled in twenty years. By 1770, some 25,000 Yankees had spilled over onto the disputed Grants, filling the territory from the south. Like so many New Englanders, Thomas Chittenden faced a Faustian bargain. If he and his large family remained in Connecticut, despite all their prestige they would have to divide their land into such small pieces for their heirs that no one could expect to live as well as they had. If they sold out and migrated to the Green Mountains region, they might some day lose title to their new lands and have, at best, to repurchase it from New York grantees. Chittenden, a shrewd man, decided he would take this risk.

In part at least, he was encouraged by other members of his family. In March, 1773, Chittenden's sister, Elisheba, and her husband Sylvanus Evarts sold their Connecticut proper-

The prospect from Williston's Winooski River shore that drew Thomas Chittenden to Vermont.

ties and bought a farm in Castleton with a half-share in a sawmill and water rights to Lake Bomoseen. Brother Bethuel also decided to move to the Grants. During recent years in Connecticut, the Chittendens had become friends with the Allen family. By that January, Ira, Ethan and Heman Allen had purchased a large tract of land in the Champlain Valley and organized the Onion River Land Company. The lure to purchase good, abundant and cheap land set off a speculative boom in Connecticut that translated into a land rush onto the Grants.

In the spring of 1773, Thomas Chittenden journeyed with Abijah Pratt and Jonathan Spafford to the Winooski Valley. He purchased 1,236 acres of Williston land from the Allens. On May 17, 1773, they signed a bond to purchase the lands from the Onion River Company for "the sum of £500 current money of the Province of New York." One half the land was to be prime intervale land, the rest wooded upland. Later, Chittenden bought another 2,000 acres of intervale lands from Heman Allen. He already owned a proprietary share in Jericho across the river. The Chittenden purchase greatly added legitimacy to the Allens' claim to the region. The migration of such a distinguished family as the Chittendens was sure to draw other respectable settlers to the backwoods region. Signing a bond to build on his new lands within a year, Chittenden left two hired men to clear and fence land, build log cabins and plant the first crop while he returned to Connecticut to fetch his family.

In May of 1774, shortly after their tenth child, Electa, was born, Colonel Chittenden, his friends Jonathan Spafford and Abijah Pratt, their wives and children and livestock followed the marks blazed by hatchet on the Allens' trail from Castleton to the Winooski Valley and took up their lands in the new settlement of Williston. More settlers came from Salisbury the next Spring and bought land from Chittenden. By mid-1776, there were forty settlers living among the stumps and crops and farm animals in Thomas Chittenden's "paradise."

The Chittenden family was immediately considered the leading family of the Williston settlement, not only because they owned the most land but, in the hierarchical society of New England, Chittenden ranked in the highest tier as a descendant of a founding Connecticut family that had held colonial office in America for four generations. His wife, Elizabeth Meigs, was also from a distinguished Puritan family. Both were literate and accomplished. Thomas had held the highest offices in Litchfield County. In addition to his colonelcy, the highest rank in the provincial militia, he had been justice of the peace and a colonial legislator. Few colonial Americans could claim higher status and this was instantly recognized in the new settlements. Wherever he went in New England, Chittenden was bound to be deferred to. As soon as he left Connecticut and led a new settlement into the wilderness, he was considered its natural leader, the prime mover in a county that would one day be named after him. In fact, in March, 1774, when the proprietors of Burlington and Colchester, which still only existed on paper, met in Salisbury, Connecticut, they elected Chittenden moderator. It was to be his first of many posts in his newly-chosen state.

Not that he flaunted his authority. Quite the opposite. He was frugal and he preferred to dress, speak and act as nothing more than a plain farmer—which often fooled the pretentious. According to one Vermont legend he owned a coat which could be worn either side out. One side was scarlet: he wore it when he was a high-ranking Connecticut militia officer and then Captain-General of the Vermont militia. The other side was dark blue, worn when he was presiding over a meeting or simply minding his own business. He wore no wig and no powder, a plain stock at his throat if any, and an unadorned vest, even though he owned a rare silver pocket watch and monogrammed silver vest buttons and late in life walked with the assistance of a gold-headed cane.

One day during his governorship, a resplendently uniformed British courier rode up to Chittenden as he was feeding his hogs. As the Englishman dismounted, so the story

goes, he carelessly handed the bumpkin of a provincial the reins of his horse and inquired if His Excellency Governor Chittenden was at home. The farmer holding his horse answered, "Yes." The British officer strode to the front door. He asked Mrs. Chittenden if he might see her husband. She answered that he had already met him: he was the fellow the Englishman was using for a hitching post. Chittenden accepted the mortified officer's apologies and had a good laugh.

Vermont writer and historian Dorothy Canfield Fisher told the story of a fancily-dressed rider who found his path blocked by a large hay wagon. A farmer sat on its fresh-cut cargo. The visitor rode up alongside and asked the farmer, "Can you tell me where His Excellency Governor Thomas Chittenden lives?" The farmer, casting his eye over the braided tricorn hat, the brilliant blue coat and lace ruffles and shining gold buttons, replied, "I'm going there. Follow me." The wagon bumped along slowly on the rutted dirt road and finally creaked into a barnyard. The farmer jumped down from the haywagon, dusted off his trousers and said, "I'm Governor Chittenden. What can I do for you?"

Elizabeth Chittenden was equally capable of embroidering a fine bed coverlet of wool from sheep she had raised and fleece she had carded and combed and spun and twisted herself until it was fit to be a wedding present for one of her six daughters. "A person of congenial education and habits, of a robust constitution and strong mind," as one early Vermont historian put it, she detested fol-de-rol. When visitors found their way to the Chittendens, they were shocked as she blew the dinner horn and then seated the farmhands at the table with her family and served them first. *They* were the people doing the hard work that provided sustenance for everyone else, she explained.

The Chittendens' frugality and simplicity has made them legendary among Vermonters—and deeply misunderstood by some later historians who fancied themselves more sophisticated because they had spent more years in school.

The life of an Eighteenth Century farmer was quite different from some academic historians' picture of farm life today. Thomas Chittenden was literate. As a magistrate and the only early Vermont leader with legislative experience, he understood natural rights, civil and criminal law as well as parliamentary procedure. As a colonel of militia, he had to understand logistics, recordkeeping, finance, supply and military and civil law. As a devout Puritan, he knew his Bible front to back and could be counted on to summon up pithy and often witty quotations to make his point. Yet some modern historians, because he was a farmer, have turned him into a semi-literate country bumpkin, a down-home miniature Paul Bunyon. They forget that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and most English and American gentlemen were farmers. But like the other Founding Fathers, he resorted to occasional variant spellings—American spelling was not regularized until decades after his death—and did not write with a beautiful round handwriting, he has been sometimes downgraded into a rude hick. He had clerks to do his finished letters: the thinking, the facts and the wit were his. Too many modern historians are willing to accept the few caustic remarks of contemporaries, often his political rivals, who did not "get" Thomas Chittenden either. But most of his generation got him just right. That is why they immediately put him on every committee that considered their fate, quickly made him their leader and re-elected him governor a record seventeen times.

The Chittendens and other early settlers of what was to become Vermont could leave behind the crowded coastal colonies and trek into the wilderness, but they could not escape the events that were embroiling the British Empire in the mid-1770s. After ten years of colonial protests, in April, 1775, the British Army had marched out of Boston to seize arms and arrest leaders of the spreading protest movement. Within three weeks of the first fighting at Lexington and

Concord, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, organized in the early 1760s to repel New York settlers, had organized an attack on the British fortresses at Ticonderoga and Crown Point, launching their offensive from Vermont soil. With the aid of Benedict Arnold and his Massachusetts militiamen, the Green Mountain troops quickly gained control of Lake Champlain.

As one American army under General Philip Schuyler advanced northward into Canada from Lake Champlain, and another under Arnold attacked through the Maine woods that winter, present-day Vermont became an American base for the Canadian expeditions. Convoys of bateux glided past the new settlements heading north along the lake with reinforcements, supplies—and leaders of the Continental Congress. In the Spring of 1776, Benjamin Franklin and three Marylanders, Samuel Chase, future Roman Catholic Bishop John Carroll and Charles Carroll, the wealthiest man in America, stopped off at Squire Ferris's lakefront house at present-day Panton before sailing north to organize the combined French-Canadian and American forces briefly holding Quebec Province. Had they succeeded, Quebec would have become the fourteenth state.

In May, 1776, the inevitable British counterattack came. Massive reinforcements pursued the retreating Americans south into present-day Vermont. By July, 1776, as the American colonies declared their independence from British rule, the thinly-populated Grants lay virtually defenseless. The British began building their first freshwater navy at St. John's, Quebec; their Indian allies probed and raided south as far as Fort Ticonderoga, where a smallpox-plagued force of some 16,000 Americans awaited the British attack.

Twice the Chittendens had planted successful farms in new colonies. By the late summer of 1776 as the British and their native allies swept southward down Lake Champlain with a formidable armada of men-of-war and war canoes, the Chittendens had built a house and outbuildings, dug a stock

pond, fenced and raised crops and begun to build cabins for their older sons. But it was obvious that they must flee. They dug out a knoll near their pond and buried all of the belongings they could not carry. So successful was their hiding place that for years the story went that they had sunk everything in the pond. Only a century after Chittenden's death did his great-grandson Lucius reveal that the hideaway had been in the hillside not the pond.

When all the Williston settlers fled south that summer, the Chittendens rented an abandoned farm in Danby. There, they turned loose their horses and oxen and Thomas began to ride over each day to Cephas Kent's tavern in Dorset, where leaders of the Grants were pondering what to do in the wake of the British invasion. During the next two years, there were to be nineteen sessions, or "conventions," of delegates from Vermont towns able to send representatives. Four of them took place in Kent's tavern on the green in Dorset.

Virtually all of the delegates assembled at Dorset agreed that they must set up a separate government and appeal to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia for admission to the United Colonies, which had just declared their independence from Great Britain. They also agreed that to try to make peace with New York was all but fruitless, especially in view of events that had occurred since Chittenden had migrated to Williston.

Back in March, 1774, the New York Assembly had passed a law "for preventing tumultuous and riotous assemblies" that was aimed directly at the Green Mountain Boys. The law provided "for the more speedy and effectual punishing the rioters." Anyone who assaulted a civil officer, burned or destroyed grain, corn or hay or destroyed property would "suffer death." The same day on which the New York governor signed the law he offered a reward of £50 for the capture of Ethan Allen or any of the other "ringleaders" of the Green Mountain Boys. By deciding to cast his lot with other leaders of the Grants at Dorset, Thomas Chittenden made himself an outlaw with a price on his head.

The harsh New York Assembly penal act plus Royal Governor Sir William Tryon's proclamation of 1774 had only served to unify the grant towns west of the Green Mountains. In April, 1774, their representatives had met and resolved "that for the future every necessary preparation be made and that our inhabitants hold themselves in readiness, at a minute's warning, to aid and defend such friends of ours who, [as] further merit to the great and general cause, are falsely denominated rioters." Ethan Allen had distributed a pamphlet warning that anyone who tried to capture him would be killed. At the same time, in the autumn of 1774, the Grants settlers had met in their first Convention in Manchester. They had resolved that "we will stand by and defend such friends and neighbors who are indicted at the expense of our lives and fortunes."

Then, in the Spring of 1775, shortly before Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold and the Green Mountain Boys stormed Fort Ticonderoga, one hundred farmers brandishing clubs had occupied the Westminster courthouse to prevent the New York-appointed court from sitting. The New York sheriff and his deputies seized the courthouse and killed two "rioters." The episode became known as the Westminster Massacre. The Allens saw the "massacre" as the opportunity to unite settlers from both sides of the mountains.

On July 26, 1775, delegates from towns west of the Green Mountains convened in Kent's Tavern in Dorset and elected officers for the newly-organized regiment of Green Mountain Rangers. Ethan Allen nominated himself as Colonel Commandant; he also proposed 300-pound Seth Warner, who came to the proceedings in an oxcart, as his second-in-command. The first Dorset convention by 41-5 vote rejected Allen and chose Warner as lieutenant colonel. Allen was to put down his humiliation to "old farmers"—did he include Thomas Chittenden?—"who did not incline to go to war." But the convention did decide to perpetuate itself, to hold further conventions to coordinate a common defense if invasion came and, when necessary, to discuss politics.

By mid-winter of 1775-76, the political situation had grown more critical as Benedict Arnold's invasion of Canada foundered after the futile attack on Quebec. Vermont had become a highway for troops and supplies being sent north to reinforce the defeated American force. Neutrality in the Grants had become an unrealistic wish by the time the Second Convention met in Dorset in January, 1776.

Thomas Chittenden had scarcely found housing for his family when the third Dorset convention got underway on July 26, 1776. It was the largest assemblage to date, with forty-one delegates arriving from thirty-two towns. Chittenden attended as the delegate from Williston. This was the first time he had taken an active role in politics since he had arrived in the Grants. The arrival of a skilled veteran of legislative assemblies had an immediate impact. Overnight, he was elected to almost every key committee. He listened with deepening concern to a report from Heman Allen, who had taken the Grants' January 1776 petition for recognition to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The New York delegates reacted hotly to the Grants' refusal to cooperate with the "Yorkers," as they were called. They were supported by other states' delegations who feared the secession of parts of their colonies. Wisely, Allen had withdrawn the petition before it could come to a vote.

Allen withdrew the petition one week before the Continental Congress unanimously passed a resolution that only heightened the sense of isolation and gloom among the delegates in Dorset. On May 15th, the Continental Congress had recommended that each colony send delegates to Philadelphia to vote for independence. "Where no government sufficient to the exigencies of the affairs has been hitherto established," (as in the New Hampshire Grants), the colonies were to create governments that would "best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents." Yet the Grants' petition had been rebuffed. On June 7th, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia intoned the words in Philadelphia that triggered the Declaration of Independence. Signalling the

formal political break with England, Lee resolved "that these United Colonies are and of right ought to be, free and independent states."

The informal rejection of the Grants' offer of support for the Continental cause in exchange for recognition only encouraged advocates in Dorset toward setting up an independent state in the Grants. Thomas Chittenden quickly emerged as a leader and spokesman of this movement. Appointed on July 26th to a committee to study Allen's report, Chittenden the very next day recommended "that application [should] be made to the inhabitants of [these] Grants to form the same into a separate district." In other words, the delegates decided to poll their towns for support for a new and independent state outside the jurisdictions of the British Empire and the newly-declared United States of America.

But not only were the delegates intent on creating a separate government but, in a classic piece of one-upsmanship, the Chittenden committee drafted an Act of Association that pledged this new state to defend their American neighbors:

> We, the subscribers, inhabitants of the district of lands commonly called and known by the name of the New Hampshire Grants, do voluntarily and solemnly engage under all the ties held sacred amongst mankind, at the risk of our lives and fortunes to defend by arms the United American States against the hostile attempts of British fleets and armies until the present unhappy controversy between the two countries shall be settled.

An American navy was being fitted with cannon at Mount Independence; a British fleet was under construction just across the Canadian frontier at St. John's. The delegates at Dorset voted 49-1 to approve the Association. The convention then voted to condemn anyone supporting New York's claims as "enemies to the Common Cause of the New Hampshire Grants."

Appointed on the second day of the convention to three more committees, Chittenden and Seth Warner were delegated to carry a petition to Major General Philip Schuyler, commander of the Northern Department of the Continental Army based at Fort Ticonderoga, requesting his aid in defending the Grants. An even more important assignment was Chittenden's appointment to a nine-man Committee of Appeals. This group would evolve a few months later into the Committee of War and then become the Board of War.

Finally, Chittenden was elected to serve on a committee with Ira Allen and Dr. Jonas Fay to travel over the Green Mountains to win the allegiance of the eastern Connecticut River valley towns: only one had sent a delegate to Dorset. As political scientist Frank Smallwood points out, the Dorset Convention "could hardly claim to be representative of the inhabitants in the Grants. Most of the delegates were either self-selected or were chosen by a local committee without a popular vote by town residents."

Chittenden evidently carried out his mission to the east successfully: next time, eight eastern towns sent eleven delegates and two sent letters of support. The convention elected Chittenden to an eight-member steering committee that made recommendations that guided the other delegates. Just which member proposed which action must remain shrouded in mystery. All of their words and deeds were seditious treason against the British government. Only secrecy and anonymity could provide a measure of security.

The steering committee's most important instruction to the Fourth Dorset Convention was to formalize the Grants as a separate "district". The delegates voted "aye." Then, moving carefully to break from New York State—"for the time being"—until the towns could vote, they rejected New York's laws and jurisdiction. Next, the Convention appointed Chittenden to a four-man committee to draw up a covenant that constituted the Grants as a separate and legitimate political entity. Chittenden pored over the solemn declaration as his grandfather had done more than a century earlier when

the Chittendens arrived in the New World. This covenant pledged the delegates to "strictly and religiously adhere" to the resolves of the Conventions and to obey "the free voice of the friends to American liberties." Brandishing the sword of defiance toward the British, they carefully held out the olive branch of conciliation to Congress. Chittenden's experienced hand as a Governor and conciliator is evident in each of the committee's evolving state papers. In his saddlebags as he fled south he had brought his set of wellworn Connecticut law books.

> We, the subscribers, inhabitants of that district of lands commonly called and known by the name of the New Hampshire Grants, being legally delegated and authorized to transact the public and political affairs of the aforesaid District of Lands, for ourselves and our constituents, do solemnly covenant and engage that, for the time being, we will strictly and religiously adhere to the several resolves of this or a future Convention constituted in said District by the free voice of the Friends to American Liberties that shall not be repugnant to the resolves of the honorable Continental Congress relative to the General Cause of America.

At this point, the delegates in Dorset set up a provisional government, firmly placing the Grants in the American Revolution. By this step alone, Thomas Chittenden and his colleagues made themselves traitors to the established British government. If they were captured, they could be hanged, drawn and quartered as rebels. What had begun as protests against British policies carried out through the royal government of New York now officially became a revolutionary war.

The Fourth Dorset Convention now appointed a Board of War, with Chittenden as a member, adopted a military code and ordered the construction of a log jail at Manchester—

Vermont's first public building—to house "Tories"—active loyal citizens of the British government. It was to be a civil war within a revolution, not only for home rule but who should rule at home.

For the first time local leaders in the Grants seemed ready to stand firmly behind the Continental Congress in faraway Philadelphia. They voted to send delegates to carry a Remonstrance and Petition to the Continental Congress asking it to recognize the Grants as a separate and independent government. They also voted to offer their military support on the basis of their residence on lands granted by the New Hampshire government. But they drew the line at cooperating with revolutionaries in New York.

> We are entirely willing to do all in our power in the general cause under the Continental Congress . . . but are not willing to put ourselves under the honourable provincial congress of New York in such manner as might, in future, be detrimental to our private property.

In July, 1776, when the Continental Congress had declared American independence from Great Britain, it had left the fate of the Grants undecided. Only one month later, as Chittenden and the other delegates converged at Dorset, the revolutionary New York Assembly decreed that all quitrents and fees formerly due to Great Britain by settlers on the Grants were now due to the new state government of New York. In September, the fifty-eight delegates from Grants towns, assembled at Kent's Tavern, issued a call for independence from New York.

In the frigid winter weather of January, 1777, Thomas Chittenden journeyed over the mountains to Westminster for the adjourned session of the Dorset Convention. Chittenden had passed up attending the October, 1776, session of the

Convention at Westminster; only seventeen delegates had attended amid the turmoil of the five-day naval battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain and the advance south on Lake Champlain of the British. After the British had withdrawn to Quebec for the winter, the twenty-one delegates who had braved the bad weather and worse roads of winter returned with a more representative number and voted to create "a new and separate state." Chittenden was elected to a five-man committee to draft the Declaration of Independence for the new state, which the delegates voted to call New Connecticut. Chittenden was also elected as a delegate to carry the declaration to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia "and further to negotiate business in behalf of New Connecticut." In some sense, he had been appointed a delegate to the Continental Congress. Chittenden's name appeared second on the declaration and petition to join the Continental Congress under the signature of Jonas Fay of Bennington. Undoubtedly, they had collaborated in drafting it.

The declaration Chittenden and Fay took to the State House in Philadelphia made clear not only the sufferings of the Grants under New York's pretensions but pointed out their vital support of the Continental Congress at Fort Ticonderoga during the campaigns of 1775 and 1776. It also shrewdly noted that their "respectable frontier" shielded the borders of these states and could "muster more than five thousand hardy soldiers."

On April 7, 1777, a New Hampshire delegate to the Continental Congress, William Whipple, wrote from Philadelphia to his colleague, Josiah Bartlett, of the arrival of Chittenden and the Vermont petition:

> New York, I expect, will give an infinity of trouble. A long letter was laid this morning from that Convention respecting the New Hampshire Grants . . . A deputation is also arrived from the Green Mountain Boys, but their matters are not yet

> laid before Congress. I should not much care if the Devil had them all.

The New York Convention's January 20 and March 1, 1777, letters to Congress, which asked for help in restoring the territory of the Grants to the control of New York, were read in Congress on April 7th. The January 15th petition of "sundry inhabitants of the New Hampshire grants" seeking recognition as an independent state and the right to send delegates to Congress, was presented to Congress the next day. In Congress, the Vermonters were being called "defectors" and "insurgents." New York delegate William Duer summed up the mood of Congress in a letter to the New York Convention:

> The deputies from New Connecticut are now in town and have presented to Congress a memorial . . . I can by no means think that this attempt to dismember our state will be countenanced by Congress, though, I am sorry to say, that I can very easily perceive that individuals from the Eastern states [New England] mean to support [the Vermonters] in their extravagant pretensions.

Shortly after the Vermont delegation headed home, its allies in Congress, principally the Reverend Dr. Thomas Young, a Pennsylvania radical who had once been Ethan Allen's tutor, mounted a campaign to win support for the Vermont petition. On April 21st, the New York delegates fired off a report to Albany stating they were worried by Dr. Young's "address" to "the insurgents in our state." These "insurgents," the leaders of Vermont, had "taken the minds of several of the leading members of Congress."

Chittenden's efforts in Philadelphia had, however, made its own deep impression. North Carolina was worried that settlers on its own frontier would secede and form a separate state. Delegate Thomas Burke wrote home to Governor

Richard Caswell and called the "affair" of Vermont's petition "something embarrassing." The "new state (called New Connecticut) seemed to be patronized by the Eastern delegates." But Congress had tabled the matter "and I hope will be wise enough to decline any interposition." Like many members of Congress, Burke dreaded a confrontation over the Grants. "I consider all jealousies as injurious to our common cause and as laying the foundation of future evils," he wrote North Carolina's governor. But Vermont's attempt had won powerful allies. General Horatio Gates, the new commander of the Continental Army's Northern Department, had joined in their meetings and recommended to Congress that Vermont's independence be acknowledged and its delegates seated by Congress.

When Chittenden had presented the petition to Congress on April 7th, however, New York's delegates had brought pressure on their colleagues to table the petition until a committee could study the matter. Pleading the pressure of more urgent business, Congress ruled that no decision could be made and no delegates seated until Congress studied the controversy and then not until after hostilities with Great Britain had ended. Rebuffed, Chittenden angrily withdrew the petition for membership and headed home to Vermont. It was not for two more months that the Vermont petition was discussed in Congress's Committee of the Whole and then a lengthy report rejecting Vermont's petition was laid before Congress. But no final action was taken after it was learned that, meanwhile, the Vermonters had adopted their own constitution.

On his return to Bennington, Thomas Chittenden turned to full-time involvement in establishing and governing the new state. In his absence, the Convention, which had by now begun to act as a provisional government, had learned that there was already a settlement called "New Connecticut" on the Susquehanna River in northern Pennsylvania. Crossing the mountains once again to Windsor on the

Connecticut River, Chittenden took part in the June 4, 1777 Convention that, at the suggestion of Dr. Young of Pennsylvania, chose the name "Vermont."

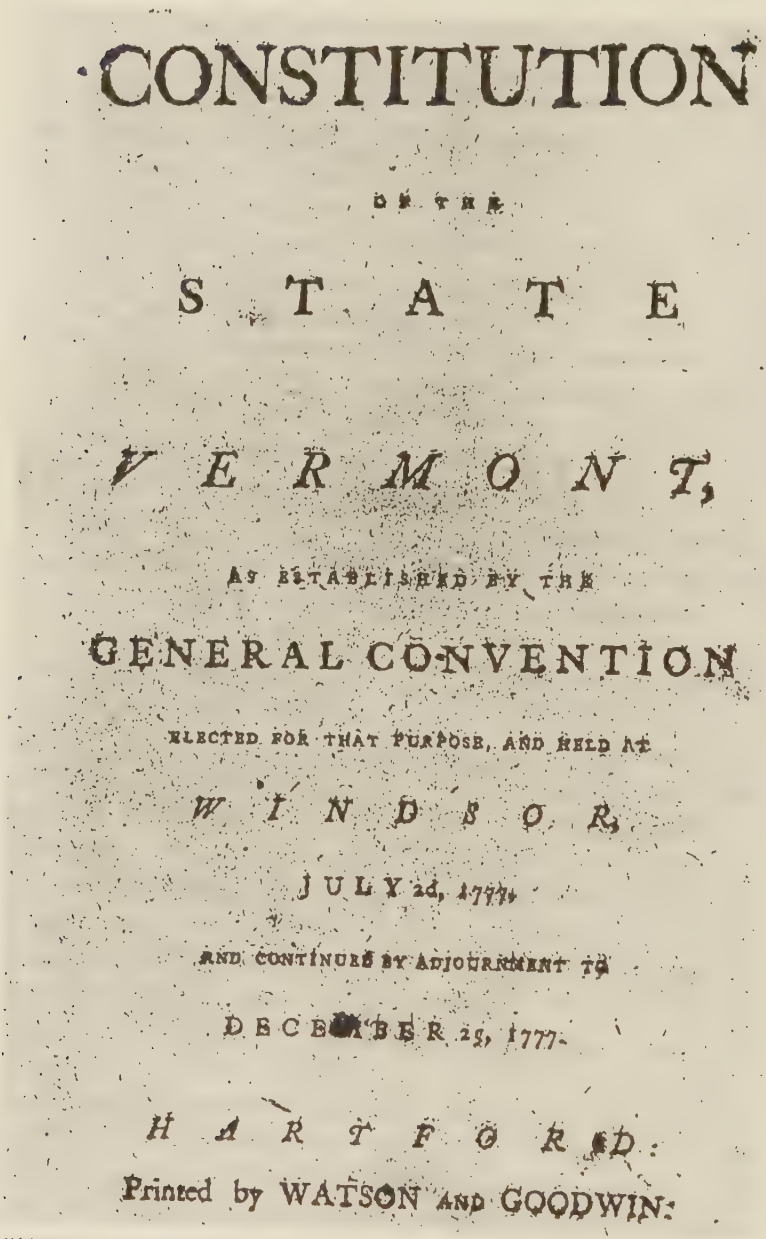
While Chittenden and Fay had been pleading the Grants' cause in Philadelphia, the *Connecticut Courant* printed the January 15th declaration of independence of the Westminster Convention—but without the list of grievances that lay behind it. Chittenden now helped to draw up a bill of "complaints" against New York that closely resembled in form and tone the list of grievances written in the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson:

> They have hired foreign troops, emigrants from Scotland . . . and armed them to drive us out of possession.
>
> They have sent the savages on our frontiers to destroy us.

Despite the latest rebuff in Philadelphia, some seventy-two delegates from twenty-two western towns and twenty-six eastern towns, both record numbers, assembled at Windsor, and swore to contribute to the Continental war effort.

Just in time.

In late June, 1777, the British unleashed a second invasion down Lake Champlain. This time, there were 10,000 Redcoats, Hessians and their Indian allies. By early July, as the Convention reconvened at Windsor, the British controlled virtually all of Vermont west of the mountains and north of Castleton. Chittenden represented the town of Danby at this most historic Vermont convention. While the delegates debated, Chittenden co-authored Vermont's Constitution with Ira Allen, possibly his most lasting achievement even as British troops were besieging Fort Ticonderoga and dragging artillery up to the summit of Mount Defiance, (convincing the American commander, General Arthur St. Clair, to abandon this most important American fortress). Chittenden adapted



CONSTITUTION

OF THE

STATE

OF

VERMONT,

AS ESTABLISHED BY THE

GENERAL CONVENTION

ELECTED FOR THAT PURPOSE, AND HELD AT

WINDSOR,

JULY 2d, 1777,

AND CONTINUED BY ADJOURNMENT TO

DECEMBER 25, 1777.

HARTFORD:

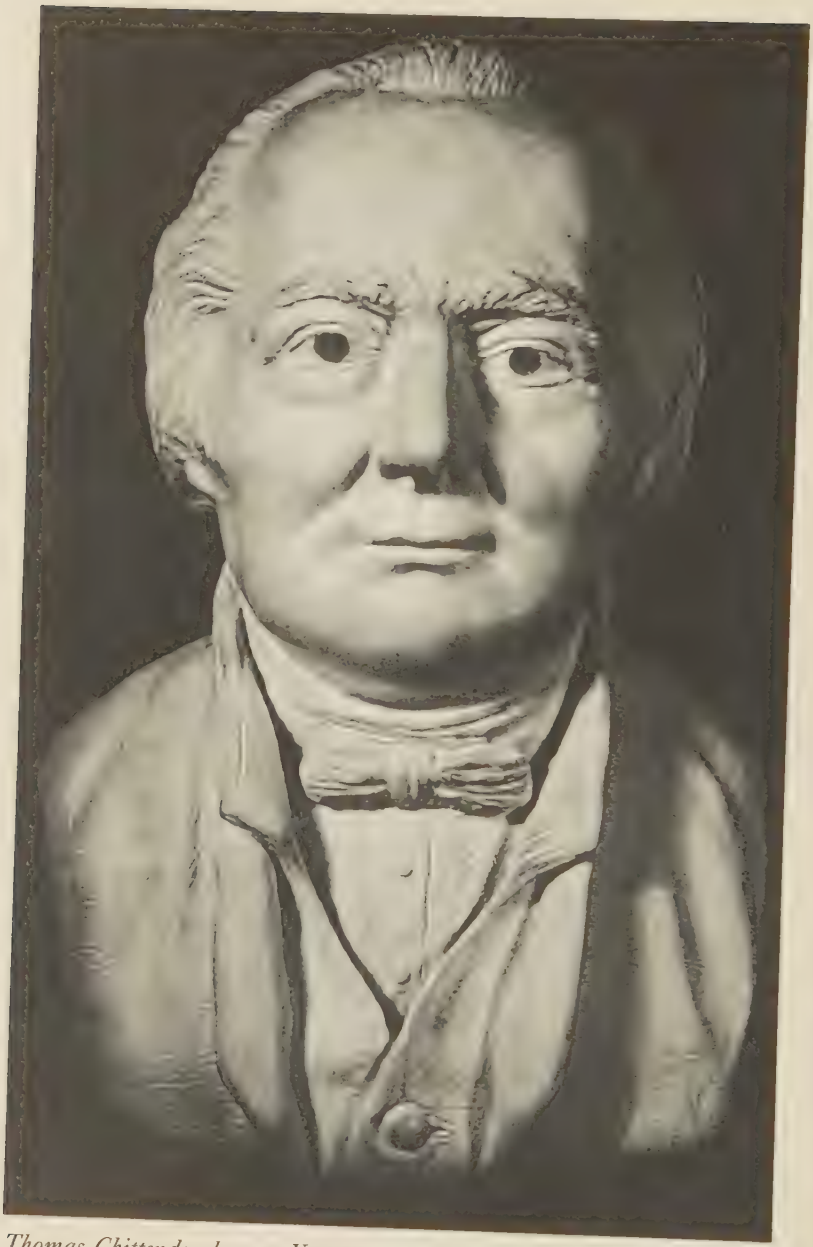
Printed by WATSON AND GOODWIN.

Chittenden's greatest contribution may have been to help forge the Constitution of Vermont in 1777.

the radical Pennsylvania Constitution co-authored by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine. Dr. Young had given him a copy when they met in Philadelphia.

The Constitution Thomas Chittenden helped to forge included some twenty-seven changes from the Pennsylvania document. It went further than any other state constitution in guaranteeing human rights. Its first article prohibited slavery: Vermont became the first American state to ban the slave trade or ownership. It also eliminated the property qualification for male suffrage and provided compensation "for private property taken for public use." It broadened religious liberty, assuring "security of Protestants against civil disabilities on account of religion." Only Vermont could police Vermont. Debtors could only be arrested if the creditor could prove "he is in danger of losing his debt." No Vermonter could be "transported for trial out of state for an offense committed within it." No law could be enacted hastily and the powers of the governor and his council were to be subject to review and restriction. Significant for Chittenden, it dispensed with the Pennsylvania ban on continuous re-election of state officials and multiple officeholding. It also provided for a strong governor who would rule as "governor-in-council" and gave the governor the power to review all legislation proposed by the General Assembly before its passage.

Until general elections could be held, the Convention created a Council of Safety, which was a provisional government with unlimited police, taxing and judicial powers. At its first meeting, in Manchester on July 11, 1777, the Council elected Chittenden its president. In one year in Vermont politics, he had emerged as its leader. He moved his family farther away from the enemy, first to Pownal after Ticonderoga fell, then to Williamstown, Massachusetts, finally to a rented farm in Arlington. President Chittenden moved Vermont's government to the Catamount Tavern in Bennington. There, he presided night and day, deciding or helping to decide every detail of Vermont's desperate struggle for survival



Thomas Chittenden became Vermont's first governor in 1777 and was re-elected all but one year until he died in 1796.

against British invaders, Loyalist "intestine" enemies and hostile authorities in the three states bordering on the new Republic of Vermont. Ethan Allen could be of no help during this critical period because, after a rash attempt to capture Montreal, he had been captured and shipped off to England in irons.

The first and greatest problem the new Vermont government faced was defense—and, more particularly, how to pay for it. The Council had to raise, arm, feed and clothe troops, build forts and coordinate local councils of safety. Basically, Vermont was defenseless. After a brave but brief rearguard action at Hubbardton under Seth Warner, the Americans had continued their retreat slowly southward under pressure from General John Burgoyne's veteran army of redcoats.

Chittenden and his Council knew that they must come up with an independent regiment of Vermont militia to protect the settlers now that the Continental Army had withdrawn to the south. As Abby Hemenway wrote, "It was a dark hour. There was no public treasury, no time for taxation, no credit to borrow, and the whole population, and in fact most of the members, were poor." At a late-night session at the Catamount Tavern, as most of the dejected councilors sank into silence at their helplessness, Chittenden rose at his place at the long council table and gave one of his most impassioned speeches:

> We have sent a dispatch requesting aid of New Hampshire. But how can we expect they will do anything till we do something for ourselves, 'till they know whether they will find among us more friends to feed and assist than enemies to impede them? And I submit to you, gentlemen, whether it is not now high time to act to some purpose. If we can't vote taxes, we can contribute towards raising a military force, if you will agree to raise one . . . .

> Let us show the world that [we] can be *men*. I have ten head of cattle which, by way of example, I will give for the emergency. But am I more patriotic than the rest of you here and hundreds of others in the settlements? My wife has a valuable gold necklace. Hint to her today that it is needed and, my word for it, tomorrow will find it in the treasury of freedom. But is *my* wife more spirited than yours and others? Gentlemen, I wait your propositions.

And then he adjourned the meeting until the next morning.

The next morning, a sleepless Ira Allen brought to the meeting a proposal that would provide revenue throughout the war. It was Allen's suggestion to appoint agents to seize and sell the personal and real property of Loyalists, including livestock, crops, clothes, household goods and farm equipment. This move would not only raise cash but would stifle Loyalist dissent. This course of action must have been painful to Chittenden; his brother-in-law, Sylvanus Evarts, was one of the Loyalist men who had fled to join the British. Chittenden supported the idea, however, and, overnight, Vermont had an army. (He was able to keep his cows and his wife's jewels.) This episode illustrates Chittenden's low-key but persuasive creativity of leadership that often prodded others around him to react with equal creativity.

Painfully aware of the plight of the wives and children left behind when Loyalists escaped to join the British in Canada or New York, Chittenden earned a reputation for compassion toward the families of those whose property was confiscated. In February, 1778, he ordered the commissioner for confiscation in the town of Clarendon to lease to the wife of Loyalist Daniel Walker her husband's farm so that she and her children could survive and so that the state would still derive income to help feed its troops. One month later, Chittenden granted permission for the family of an Arlington Loyalist to haul away its furniture and clothing when their farm was confiscated and sold.

Chittenden and his revolutionary colleagues invariably worked as a committee to decide questions of state large and small.

For much of his eight months as president of the emergency Council of State, Chittenden was busy raising troops, rounding up supplies and Tories and coordinating Vermont's participation in the war effort. So critical was the military vacuum in the face of the British onslaught that on July 15th, Chittenden commissioned Colonel Samuel Herrick to raise a regiment of rangers to augment Seth Warner's Green Mountain Boys. Sending off express riders to New Hampshire and to Vermont militia units east of the mountains, Chittenden sounded his most urgent alarm:

> This is perhaps the last express we may be able to send you . . . . Your immediate assistance is absolutely necessary . . . . Pray send all the troops you can possibly raise . . . We can repulse them if we have assistance.

The new Vermont Regiment performed admirably in the Battle of Bennington and in harassing the rear of Burgoyne's diminished army. Vermont troops recaptured Fort Ticonderoga and seized and destroyed some 200 British boats on Lake George, making British retreat to Canada all but impossible.

At every step, Chittenden saw to it that Continental generals, the Continental Congress and newspaper readers saw just how much Vermont was doing to help the common cause. Yet sometimes so swamped was Chittenden with the myriad details of running the state that, in one document he wrote in January, 1778—he had just declared an embargo on exporting wheat, rye, Indian corn, flour or meal from the hungry state—he pleaded with the citizenry to limit the amount of "private business" brought before the Council which "hinders them from pursuing the business they were principally appointed for."

For example, on November 16, 1777, the Council had to consider the weighty matter of Mary Reynolds' horse. Ms. Reynolds, evidently a Loyalist, was "permitted to send for her gray horse and keep him in her possession until further orders from this Council." On December 20th, Governor Chittenden had to sign "an order to take one cow belonging to this state now in the custody of John Conner of Manchester which cow is to be appraised and an account returned to this Council." On January 30, 1778, as hunger gripped the state as the result of the British invasion during the previous summer's harvest, the Governor-in-Council had to give special permission for Major Jeremiah Clark "to transport nine bushels of wheat out of this state."

During the bitter winter of 1777-78, while George Washington's Continental Army huddled in huts at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Vermonters suffered an accumulation of hardships. Many towns and farms had been sacked and burned during the British invasion. As Nineteenth Century Vermonter Rowland Robinson put it,

> The people who had been driven from their homes were so destitute of grain, both for food and for seed, that the Council prohibited, under heavy penalties, the transportation of any wheat, rye, corn, flour, or meal out of this state without a permit, except Continental stores. Suffering privations that can now be scarcely understood, these people struggled through the long and bitter winter.

This account also makes it clear that, despite Vermont's rejection by the Continental Congress, Vermonters still did more than their share to support the Continental cause.

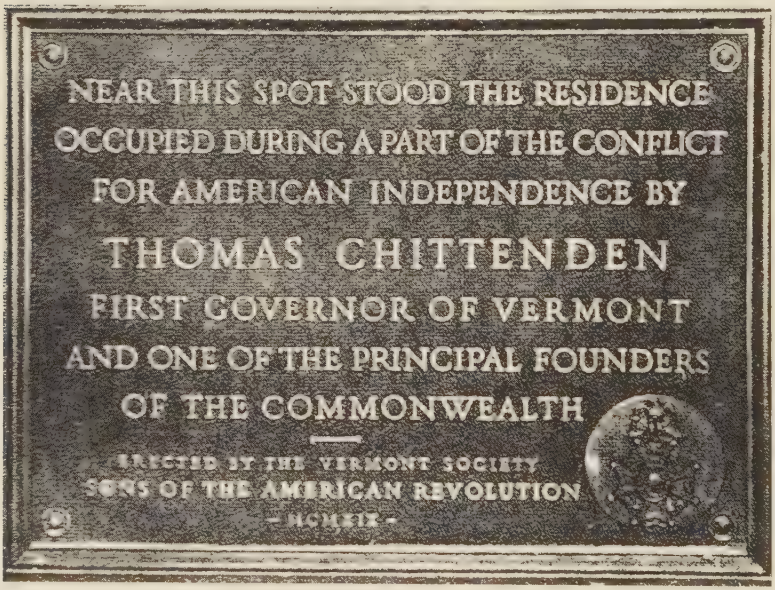
All through that bitter winter, Chittenden worked incessantly to keep Vermonters from freezing or starving to death. Faced with imminent famine, Governor Chittenden, as the Reverend F.A. Wadleigh recounted,

> took upon himself the task of visiting, from time to time, every family and taking account of the provisions on hand. Under his oversight and by his impartial and disinterested counsel, distribution was so made that, although all were pinched, none perished.

In March of 1778, a General Assembly was elected by freeholders to govern the state: it, in turn, elected Chittenden as the first governor of Vermont. The Council of State created in July of 1777 ceased to exist. But before it passed into oblivion, on December 24, 1777, Chittenden had called for a second constitutional convention to adopt a preamble he and Ira Allen had co-authored. The preamble declared that the people had the right to establish their own government. He then called the first statewide elections to adopt the state constitution and select the new General Assembly and the first state officials.

In addition to his governor's duties, Chittenden continued as president of the Board of War. So desperately thin was Vermont's line of defense against Indian marauders that at one point in February of 1778 Chittenden wrote to the Continental commander at Albany that only "a small scout of about 24 men" protected not only all of Vermont's frontier but that of the states to the south, east and west. With Burgoyne's army defeated, however, there was little interest in Congress in defending the northern frontier, although, as Chittenden well knew, each springtime brought the threat of a fresh British attack from the north.

The Assembly also added another duty to Chittenden's burden: he was named head of the Court of Confiscation to seize and sell all Loyalist real estate west of the mountains. In two years, he presided over 135 confiscation hearings. After one of these, he bought a handsome property in Arlington, paying a hefty £2,064 (a large percentage of his net worth) into



Historical marker in Arlington, Vermont.

the state coffers to support the militia. In all the Revolutionary War years, he never received a penny of salary from the state. Only later did the Assembly vote him land grants in arrears as compensation.

The entry of France into the Revolution on the side of the United States in 1778 after the American victory at Saratoga altered the nature of the war from primarily a land war to a worldwide naval war. The British held onto strong posts in Quebec, Halifax, and New York City but shifted to a strategy of defensive war coupled with diplomacy and espionage. From his headquarters in New York City, the new British commander-in-chief, Sir Henry Clinton, entertained schemes aimed at detaching disgruntled Americans from their loyalty to the Continental Congress and its armies. The plan had mixed results: one prize catch was to be Benedict Arnold. But a go-between in that affair, Loyalist Colonel Beverley Robinson, whose country estate sat opposite West Point on the Hudson River, also was actively attempting to entice Ethan Allen, finally released after three years in a prisoner exchange, and other leading Vermonters into turning their new state into a British province. This would give the British an advance foothold on the doorsteps of New York, Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

The secret negotiations began when a British officer in full regalia appeared one day in 1779 on a road through Manchester and handed Ethan Allen an envelope. "Within ten minutes," according to Colonel Allen, he had turned the envelope over to Governor Chittenden. The governor shrewdly saw an opportunity to neutralize the continuing threat from British ships and soldiers attacking down Lake Champlain. At this same time, he was trying to persuade the Continental Congress of the importance of continued Vermont support.

Under the guise of secret talks about an exchange of British and Vermont prisoners of war, Chittenden and seven

Chittenden was one of eight Vermonters who knew of the secret talks with the British military governor of Quebec, Frederick Haldimand, during the Revolution.

other Vermont leaders who knew of the secret negotiations managed to arrange a ceasefire with the British governor-general in Quebec that included even the northern New York forts. Ethan and Ira Allen became the principal intermediaries in talks at Crown Point and Quebec with General Frederick Haldimand, Clinton's second-in-command in charge of all Quebec Province.

At every step, Chittenden kept the American commander-in-chief, General Washington, informed of his actions—even as New York officials and officers kept up a constant barrage of suspicion and innuendo in their attempt to turn Washington against statehood for Vermont. What made the affair all the more delicate was that, as the Revolutionary War ground to an end, Vermont's neighbors no longer needed her troops and the buffer zone she had provided, and turned once again to threats of dismembering her at war's end.

Even as Chittenden had worked to build a stable state, Vermont's neighbors had become a trickier problem. One complicating factor was the desire of nineteen New Hampshire towns along the Connecticut River, including modern-day Hanover, to break away from New Hampshire and join the state of Vermont. When the Vermont General Assembly voted to accept the towns' annexation, war seemed imminent between Vermont and New Hampshire. New Hampshire warned that, unless the towns were handed back, Vermont faced invasion by the United States. When the territorial integrity of one state was violated, all of the United States were obligated to respond militarily.

As if to compound the provocation, on July 18, 1781, Chittenden issued a proclamation which declared that Vermont's southeastern boundary was the Hudson River. Thus, at a stroke, he added 20 miles of New York State including the Lake George region. Early in 1782, Chittenden called a new Convention to ponder the crisis. He worked quietly, privately to persuade individual delegates to vote to rescind the annexation of the New Hampshire towns, not mentioning the New York annexation. But he purposely

Chittenden's "Greater Vermont" annexations in New Hampshire, New York and Massachusetts provoked George Washington to threaten attack by the Continental Army.

moved slowly. All the time, he was careful to grasp the opportunity to correspond, over the heads of the Vermont government and the Continental Congress, directly with General Washington. Congress had taken up deliberation of Vermont's admission to the Union again in August, 1781 and only New York had voted its continued opposition.

Dealing secretly through military couriers, General Washington, from his base at New Windsor on the Hudson, had been supplying Chittenden with the resolutions of

Congress. On January 1, 1782, he wrote again from Philadelphia on his way north from his final victory at Yorktown. Chittenden had used the pretext of a letter congratulating Washington to spell out the "essence of the dispute." Some Vermont state archivist long ago changed this vital phrase on a typed transcript in the files of the Vermont

Chittenden's secret correspondence with General Washington eased Vermont's acceptance in Congress. It was the first President who ushered Vermont into the Union in 1791.

Historical Society to read the "easing" of the dispute. Washington was a shrewd politician; he could recognize another. To Governor Chittenden, he wrote privately that he needed no persuasion as to the legitimacy of Vermont's claim:

> I will take it for granted that their right was good because Congress by their resolve of the 7th of August last imply it and by that of the 21st are willing to confirm it provided the new state is confined to certain bounds. It appears therefore to me that the dispute of boundary is the only one which exists and that, this being removed, all further difficulties would be removed also.
>
> Now I would ask you candidly whether the claim of the people of Vermont was not for a long time confined solely, or very nearly, to that tract of [Vermont] country [and] the late extension of your claim upon New Hampshire and New York was not more of a political maneuver than one in which you conceived yourselves justifiable . . . .
>
> Your late extension of claim [has] rather diminished than increased the number of your friends . . . . If such extension should be persisted in, it will be made a common cause. [It is] a loss of too serious a nature not to claim the attention of many people. There is no calamity within the compass of my foresight which is more to be dreaded than a necessity of coercion on the part of Congress.
>
> As you unbosomed yourself to me, I thought I had the greater right of speaking my sentiments openly and candidly to you. I have done so, and if they should produce the effects which I sincerely wish, that of an honorable and amicable adjustment of a matter, which if carried to hostile length may destroy the future happiness of my country, I shall have attained my end while the enemy will be defeated in their's.

IN CONGRESS,

JUNE 2d, 1780.

WHEREAS it is repreſented to Congreſs, and by authentic evidence laid before them it appears, that the people inhabiting the diſtrict of country commonly known by the name of the New-Hampſhire Grants, and claiming to be an independant ſtate, have, notwithſtanding the reſolutions of Congreſs of the 24th of September and 2d of October, proceeded, as a ſeparate government, to make grants of lands and ſales of eſtates by them declared forfeited and confiſcated; and have alſo, in divers inſtances, exerciſed civil and military authority over the perſons and effects of ſundry inhabitants within the ſaid diſtrict who profeſs themſelves to be citizens of and to owe allegiance to the ſtate of New-York:

RESOLVED, That the acts and proceedings of the people inhabiting the ſaid diſtrict, and claiming to be an independant ſtate as aforeſaid, in contravening the good intentions of the ſaid reſolutions of the 24th of September and 2d of October laſt, are highly unwarrantable and ſubverſive of the peace and welfare of the United States:

That the people inhabiting the ſaid diſtrict and claiming to be an independant ſtate as aforeſaid be and they hereby are ſtrictly required to forbear and abſtain from all acts of authority, civil or military, over the inhabitants of any town or diſtrict who hold themſelves to be ſubjects of, and to owe allegiance to, any of the ſtates claiming the juriſdiction of the ſaid territory, in whole or in part, until the deciſions and determinations in the reſolutions afore mentioned ſhall be made.

And whereas the ſtates of New-Hampſhire and New-York have complied with the ſaid reſolutions of the 24th of September and 2d of October laſt, and by their Agents and Delegates in Congreſs declared themſelves ready to proceed in ſupporting their reſpective rights to the juriſdiction of the diſtrict aforeſaid, in whole or in part, according to their ſeveral claims, and in the mode preſcribed in the ſaid reſolutions: And whereas Congreſs, by their order of the 21ſt of March laſt, did poſtpone the conſideration of the ſaid reſolutions, nine ſtates, excluſive of thoſe who were parties to the queſtion, not being repreſented; and by their order of the 17th of May laſt have directed that letters be written to the ſtates not repreſented, requeſting them immediately to ſend forward a repreſentation:

RESOLVED, That Congreſs will, as ſoon as nine ſtates, excluſive of thoſe who are parties to the controverſy, ſhall be repreſented, proceed to hear and examine into and finally determine the diſputes and differences relative to juriſdiction between the three ſtates of New-Hampſhire, Maſſachuſetts-Bay and New-York, reſpectively, or ſuch of them as ſhall have paſſed ſuch laws as are mentioned in the ſaid reſolutions of the 24th day of September and 2d of October laſt, on the one part, and the people of the diſtrict aforeſaid, who claim to be a ſeparate juriſdiction, on the other, in the mode preſcribed in and by the ſaid reſolutions.

Resolution of the Continental Congress promises to adjudicate Vermont's differences with neighboring states.

Then, Washington also wrote privately to General Philip Schuyler in Albany, who had swung his support to Vermont's independence, that he had shown this "private" letter to Chittenden "to a number of my friends, members of Congress and others. . . . Perhaps it may have some effect upon Mr. Chittenden and the leaders of Vermont." Washington was also writing to other rivals of Vermont's leaders in New York. He bluntly warned Governor George Clinton that the majority of New Englanders, especially among his officers, supported statehood for Vermont.

Almost as soon as Chittenden heard from Washington in February of 1782, he sent a resolution of the General Assembly racing south to Washington's headquarters. Vermont had decided, after all, to return to its former boundary lines. In addition, he was sending four "agents" to the Continental Congress "to negotiate the admission of the state of Vermont into the confederation of the United States." The eyeball-to-eyeball "private" negotiations of two founding fathers had succeeded where two bodies of legalistic lawmakers had so long failed. It would take ten more years of negotiations between Vermont and New York but, in the end, still-Governor Thomas Chittenden got his fondest wish when, in March of 1791, now-President George Washington signed the papers which admitted Vermont into the United States.

With the end of the Revolution in 1786, after an absence of ten years, Chittenden could at last move his family back to Williston. There, he began to build a large brick house. It was a capacious five windows wide. There was a very wide center hall with two rooms opening from each side of the hallway, both upstairs and down. In all, there were eight rooms, each with a fireplace, flanking the two gracious corridors and, throughout the house, ten-and-a-half foot ceilings. In effect, with the Governor's residence, Williston became the unofficial capital of Vermont during Chittenden's last eleven years of life.

By his Excellency

Thomas Chittenden, Esq;

Governor, Captain General and Commander in Chief in and over the State of Vermont,

A Proclamation.

The supreme Disposer of Events having been graciously pleased to order the Providential Occurrences of the Year past, as to call loudly for the Praise and Adoration of individuals, and of Community at large. And as a Public Acknowledgements of the indissoluble and unceasing Bounties of a gracious and merciful GOD, is at all Times an incumbent, and ought to be a delightful Duty of every rational Mind:

I HAVE thought fit by and with the Advice of my Council, and at the Request of the General Assembly, to appoint, and I do hereby appoint, THURSDAY the 27th Day of November next, to be observed as a Day of PUBLIC THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE, throughout this State.

And I do hereby earnestly recommend to all Persons residing within the same, strictly to observe said Day, that we may with united Hearts render unfeigned Praises to the munificent Bestower of every desirable gift, for the manifold Mercies of the Year past, both of a public and private nature: That it has pleased him to order the Seasons in infinite Mercy, abundantly to replenish the Earth, and to crown the Labour of the Husbandman with plentiful Harvests: That he has caused a Spirit of Unanimity to pervade all Ranks of People among us; and preserved us from internal Feuds and from foreign Invasion: And humbly to implore that he would direct to and bless such Means as may be necessary to put into Execution the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT of the UNITED STATES, and establish it on a permanent Basis, so that it may contribute to the best good of that extensive Empire; That it may graciously please his adoreable Majesty to order, in the course of Events, that the United States offer their Friendship and the Protection of their Government, on equitable Terms, to this State, so that we may be enabled to join with them in PERFECT UNION: That under the divine Auspices we may become a Band of Brothers, a People zealous of Good Works, whose highest Ambition shall be to honor and adore his Name, and under the Banner of the divine Redeemer, to erect an Empire that shall prove an Asylum for the persecuted and distressed from every Quarter of the Globe.

At the same Time under a deep Sense of our Unworthiness, to implore his Forgiveness of our manifold Sins, and a continuance of his Favor towards us, our Allies, and the whole World of mankind.

GIVEN under my Hand in the Council Chamber, in Manchester, this 20th Day of October, 1788, in the twelfth Year of our Independence.

Thomas Chittenden.

By his Excellency's Command,

Joseph Fay, Sec.

God save the People.

Gov. Chittenden proclaims the first Thanksgiving in Vermont on November 27, 1788.

He was only defeated for re-election once in 1789 when an investigative committee made up of rivals in the Bennington faction of the General Assembly censured him for paying Surveyor General Ira Allen with land in the Jay Peak area when there was no cash in the state treasury, without first seeking the rubber stamp of the Governor's Council. But Chittenden was never defeated at the polls. Among several candidates splitting the vote, he had failed to win an electoral majority, throwing the election into the General Assembly where he was narrowly defeated. When the facts of the case became known, he was overwhelmingly re-elected in 1790 and again every year until 1796, when he was elected for the eighteenth time.

When the Chittendens had come to Vermont in 1774, the region west of the Green Mountains had been a sparsely-settled frontier with fewer than two dozen towns, mostly little more than tiny settlements in forest clearings and along river-banks. By 1791, when Governor Chittenden ushered Vermont into the United States, two visitors from the south, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Speaker of the House James Madison, were struck by what Madison described as Vermont's "closely settled" landscape. Vermont farms, Madison recorded, "vary from 50 to 200 acres; in a few instances, they exceed 200."

By the early 1790s, according to the first census, Vermont had the highest per acre yield of wheat in the new nation and was, in all New England, the area of greatest prosperity. A young couple could come to Vermont, buy land, build a house and barn and be mortgage-free in just five years. Madison recorded how Vermonters lived, and what he described shows how closely in harmony their governor lived with the people who so often elected him. "Their living is extremely plain and economical," wrote Madison, "particularly in the table and ordinary dress. Their expense is chiefly on their houses."

By the early 1790s, Thomas Chittenden rode off each year after the harvest for the three-week fall session of the

General Assembly. There was as yet no fixed state capital: sessions moved around among eleven towns. In October, 1791, the first year that Vermont was in the Union, Chittenden rode to Windsor, where he had helped to draft the Constitution fourteen years earlier. It was the fifteenth session of the Vermont legislature and there were special ceremonies to mark the occasion. When the votes in the Assembly were all counted, Thomas Chittenden was elected governor for the thirteenth time. He was "received by a company of artillery and a company of light infantry, each corps in the most beautiful uniforms." His election was "announced by the discharge of fifteen cannon from the parade [ground]. In the evening an elegant ball was given (whether Mrs. Chittenden was on hand to dance with the Governor is not recorded) to a most brilliant assembly of Gentlemen and Ladies from this and from neighboring states."

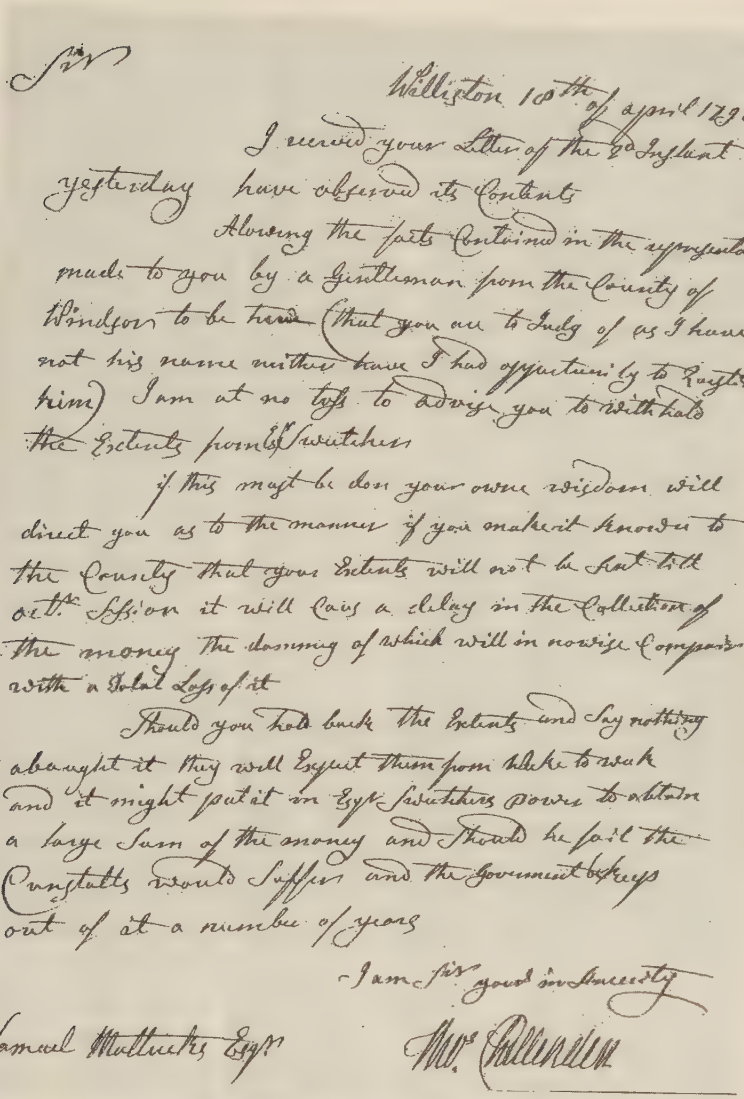
As visitors to Williston such as Nathan Perkins and Timothy Dwight attested, Thomas Chittenden built up one of the finest farms in New England in the last ten years of his life. The inventory of his estate shows that he died owning at least 10,597 acres of Vermont land. This included 1,738 acres of Williston land, some 900 acres of it on his home farm. In addition, he owned land in Castleton (150 acres), Essex (700 acres) and 7,010 acres in the Township of Jay (nearly 70% of his landholdings). It was this Jay piece, the least valuable, that had caused him the most trouble. Given him as a gift by the General Assembly during the Revolution when the state could not afford to pay salaries to its officials, it had embroiled him in controversies for years.

But Chittenden's will also shows how simply, for all the landed wealth he had accumulated, he and his wife, Elizabeth, had lived. He owned only two suits and a black travel coat, only two pair of silk stockings and half a dozen shirts. The most plentiful item in the inventory was bedcoverings—24 blankets to keep family farmhands and visitors warm. Everything about him was understated and practical:

there was no fine china except for a single set of teacups and a dozen silver spoons for the governor's guests. But the list of tools for farming, for logging in the winter woods, for surveying land and harrowing land is long. And so was the list of people who owed him money—some £2,561 or 25 percent of his net worth—many of the loans uncollectible in a land where so many settlers and speculators like Ira Allen had ended up bankrupt.

Under Thomas Chittenden's aegis, Vermont's government matured and became assimilated into the United States. Presiding over a third constitutional convention in 1793, he saw religious freedom introduced into the once-solidly-Puritan state. He saw a state militia created, a state university chartered, the first turnpike chartered to connect the Connecticut River Valley with Lake Champlain. He presided over the conversion of colony to republic to state; from pounds sterling to dollars. He also fought hard as the champion of the small farmer and the frontier town. Vermont towns, thanks to his fierce insistence, voted as a bloc from 1776 until the United States Supreme Court's one-man one-vote ruling of 1966. This was his greatest legacy, to give equality to every man and woman in every town, large or small.

To the end, he remained somewhat of a political maverick. While he favored Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans and opposed the "aristocratical" Bennington Federalists, when it appeared that the United States would join the revolutionary French in a war against England, he drew the line. At a meeting at his home in Williston on January 12, 1794, he entered into a private agreement to open talks with the Canadian government. In the presence of witnesses, Vermont's first governor "criticized the excesses of the French Revolution [and] declared Vermont was opposed to the United States joining France in war against Great Britain." Most of all now, he wanted peace, harmony and trade with Vermont's northern neighbor.



Sir

Williston 10th of april 1796

I received your Letter of the 2d Instant yesterday have observed its Contents

Alowing the facts Contained in the representation made to you by a Gentleman from the County of Windsor to be true (that you are to Judg of as I have not his name neither have I had opportunity to Question him) I am at no loss to advise you to withhold the Extents from Esq Swetchers

if this must be don your owne wisdom will direct you as to the manner if you make it known to the County that your Extents will not be sent till oct.r Session it will Cause a delay in the Collection of the money the damming of which will in nowise Compare with a Total Loss of it

Should you hold back the Extents and Say nothing abaught it they will Expect them from Weeke to weak and it might put it in Esqr Swetchers power to obtain a large Sum of the money and Should he fail the Constalls would Suffer and the Government be keeps out of it a number of years

I am Sir your in Sincerity

Samuel Mattucks Esqr

Thos Chittenden

Chittenden wrote this letter from Williston in the last months before he died. It is taken from the Public Papers of Thomas Chittenden.

During the last decade of his life, he had worked hard not only at winning statehood for Vermont but at building houses on both sides of the Winooski River for his sons. His own farm was, according to visitor Timothy Dwight, a "beautiful plantation" even if another missionary, the Reverend Nathan Perkins, visiting in 1789, declared this in his diary:

> Set out for Williston where Governor Chittenden lives . . . . A low poor house—a plain family—low, vulgar man, clownish, excessively parsimonious—made me welcome—hard fare, a very great farm—1,000 acres—hundred acres of wheat on ye Onion River—200 acres of extraordinary intervale land . . . . A shrewd cunning man—skilled in human nature and in agriculture—he understands extremely well ye mysteries of Vermont.

A more sophisticated traveler pronounced a friendlier verdict on Governor Chittenden. John Lincklaen, agent for a Dutch land company, recounted a visit to the governor at his house:

> He received us without ceremony in the country fashion. Born in Connecticut, he still retains the inquisitive character of his compatriots, and overwhelms one with questions to which one can scarcely reply. He is one of the largest and best farmers of the state and is believed to own 40,000 acres beside a considerable number of horned cattle. His house and way of living have nothing to distinguish them from those of any private individual but he offers heartily a glass of grog, potatoes and [ham] to anyone who wishes to come and see him.

This letter shows that Chittenden's landholdings were legendary: Lincklaen exaggerated them by 10,000 acres, as the inventory of Chittenden's will shows.

Rev. Nathan Perkins considered Chittenden "vulgar" and "parsimonious" after visiting his home in Williston.

For several years after he moved back to Williston, Governor Chittenden worked hard to build up not only his own estate but the town. He served his turns as a town official and helped to raise the money for the Congregational meeting house, subscribing to four front pews for his large family and pledging a generous £100 to the cost of construc-

tion (about $40,000 in today's money). There, leaning intently on his gold headed cane, he listened to the sermons of passing clergymen. In 1796, he built his son, Giles, a handsome house that still survives today. The Governor's own house was destroyed by fire in 1926.

Political enemies whispered that he was suffering from a liver ailment caused by sipping strong drink he sold illegally from a tavern in his home. The truth is unknown and unknowable. In fact, he had lived the average lifespan for a New Englander of the time despite all the vicissitude of the frontier and the making and running of a state for twenty years.

Thomas Chittenden enjoyed excellent health until 1796. By that October, he was ready to say "good-bye" to his colleagues in the General Assembly in a farewell speech that left few dry-eyed:

Governor Chittenden's handsome Williston house, built in 1790 and destroyed by fire in 1926, served as Vermont's unofficial capital as it became one of the United States.

Gentlemen of the Council and Assembly:

So well known to you are the manifold favors and blessings bestowed on us as a people, by the great Ruler of the universe, that it would be unnecessary for me to recapitulate them. I would, therefore, only observe that, but a few years since, we were without construction, law or government; in a state of anarchy and confusion; at war with a potent foreign power, opposed by a powerful neighboring State; discountenanced by the Congress; distressed by internal dissensions; all our landed property in imminent danger, and without the means of defense.

Now your eyes behold the happy day when we are in the full and uninterrupted enjoyment of a well regulated government, suited to the situation and genius of the people, acknowledged by all the powers of the earth, supported by the Congress—at peace with our sister States, among ourselves, and with the world.

From whence did these great blessings come? From God. Are they not worth enjoying? They surely are. Does it not become us as a people to improve them, that we may have reason to hope that they may be continued to us and transmitted to posterity? It certainly does. What are the most likely means to be taken by us, as a people, to obtain this great end? To be a faithful, virtuous and industrious and moral people. Does it not become us as a Legislature to take every method in our power to encourage virtue, industry, morality, religion and learning? I think it does. Is there any better method than by our own example; and having a sacred regard to virtue, industry, integrity and morality in all our appointments of executive and judicial offices?

> This is the day we have appointed to nominate all our subordinate, executive and judicial officers, throughout the State, for the present year. The people, by free suffrages, have given us the power, and in us they have placed their confidence; and to God, to them, and to our consciences we are answerable. Suffer me then as a father, as a friend, and as a lover of this people, and as one whose voice cannot be much longer heard here, to instruct you, in all your appointments, to have regard for none but those who maintain a good moral character—men of integrity, and distinguished for wisdom and abilities; in doing this, you will encourage virtue, which is the glory of the nation, and discountenance and discourage vice and profaneness, which are a reproach to any people.

After the fall session of the Assembly adjourned, Governor Chittenden came home ill in early November. The February, 1797, session, the winter journey to the south, was too much for him. For the first time in two decades, he stayed home. His last official act was to swear in an affidavit that Ira Allen, who had been captured by the British Navy while running French guns to arm an insurrection in Canada, was really purchasing them for the Vermont militia, as Allen claimed. To the end, he defended his old friends, even if it meant telling a whopper to old enemies.

In July, 1797, at age 67, he wrote an open letter to the freemen of Vermont, asking not to be slated for another term as governor. "Impaired as I am as to my health," he wrote, "I decline being considered as a candidate." Only a few weeks later, he wrote his last letter, chiding his lieutenant-governor, Paul Brigham, to bestir himself just this once and run things for a few months until the voters could choose a successor. Thomas Chittenden died on August 25, 1797, and was buried in Williston where, a century later, a monument was erected in his honor.

Thomas Chittenden's weathered headstone stands in a row of family graves in the town cemetery along Route 2 near his 1896 monument.

His obituary in the *Vermont Gazette* said he died "without apparent distress and even without a groan." The *Gazette* eulogy, probably written by Anthony Haswell, a staunch pop-

ulist like Chittenden, offers the assessment of many Vermonters of the time:

This relief of Chittenden appears at the base of his 1896 monument along Route 2.

> That Governor Chittenden was possest [sic] of great talents and keen discernment in affairs relative to men and things, no one can deny. His conversation was easy, simple and instructive and although his enemies sometimes abused his open frankness, yet it is a truth that no person knew better how to compass great designs with secrecy . . . His talents at reconciling jarring interests among the people were peculiar. His many and useful services to his country . . . entitle him to be named with the Washingtons, the Hancocks and Adamses of his day. In times of scarcity and distress . . . his granary was open to all the needy . . . . Superior to a *PRINCE, A GREAT MAN* here has fallen.

Thomas Chittenden's old friend, Ethan Allen, who had carried out so many of Governor Chittenden's marching orders, and had died ten years before him, perhaps had put it best and most succinctly of all. Thomas Chittenden, he said, was one who always acted wisely and never said a foolish thing. He was the only man he ever knew "who was sure to be right in all, even the most difficult and complex, cases and yet could not tell or seem to know why it was so."

CHAPTER THREE

Educating the Mind

The story of any Vermont town has to include a long look at how that community handled the work of educating its children for a reason that touches less on idealism than on law. Vermont provided for an educational system in its Constitution, unlike any other state up to that time. That difference makes it fair to say that Vermont towns were legally charged with moving education to a high place on the list of their duties to the state. Dorothy Canfield Fisher observed in *Vermont Tradition* that it was not unusual for Vermont towns to organize a school before they built a church even if she does not connect that practice to the founding documents of the state. The Vermont Constitution spoke plainly:

> A School or Schools shall be established in each town by the Legislature, for the convenient instruction of Youth, with such Salaries to masters, paid by each town, making proper Use of Schoollands in each town, thereby to enable them to Instruct Youth at low prices; one Grammar School in each county, and one University in this State

might to be established by the Direction of the General Assembly.

As Vermont towns go, Williston has a lot of past. One way to get a good picture of what concerned the town and how that changed over the years is to follow how Williston handled and managed its schools. The problem of growth shows up from the beginning, even before people could see it as part of Williston's transition from a farming community to something else, a change that made people think about what they wanted their children to learn.

Eventually, state officials started to figure in decisions about schools as they exerted their higher authority. Inevitably, attitudes and expectations toward the schools changed as did the town's notion of whose business it was to regulate them. In a town that was stable, with a consistent written record of local decisions about schools, it is possible to look back and see what the schools were like when those voters were the pupils. Sometimes that helps to explain particular changes. Very senior members of the community fill in other things that no one would have written down.

From the beginning, Williston's schools were everybody's business. Children, parents, and teachers experienced directly the problems of schools, but everyone in town had an opinion and often had something to say. Many residents apparently expected to be heard on the subject because whether or not they had children they did pay taxes, and the school fund came from their money. In an economy based on farming Williston residents, like so many other Vermonters, did not operate with or rely entirely on cash for taking care of what they needed. That fact made the spending of any money, personal or communal, an event to be considered carefully. In Williston's town records which go back to 1787 in handwritten form, and then in the printed Annual Reports that start in 1889, the subject of schools appears on the agenda as something that everyone expected to discuss.

The first concern for the town was the most practical one: how to pay for schools. Explicit mention of financial arrangements for schools is rare. When the 1812 town meeting voted, it was for raising one-half cent on the dollar to support the schools, an amount noted as being the same as that set aside for the poor. The 1826 town meeting refers to a vote on whether to have a tax of one dollar for each dog, in order to have the money to help Williston schools. What does show up on the record is indirect: instead of reference to school funding there is a lot of talk about the stubborn problem of dividing the town into school districts.

Districts were a fact of life very early for Williston, we know, because as early as 1801 the town meeting appointed a committee of three men—Jeremiah French, Samuel Batteman and Solomon Miller—and gave them directions to look into school districts and see if any alteration was needed. It was the state that required towns to have districts and to designate them by numbers rather than by any local or descriptive name. That task must have been on people's minds and apparently seemed important since questions of districts dominate the subject of schools in Williston for half a century. Sometimes it had to do with geography, as when some parts of town seemed more a part of a neighboring town. In 1815, for example, the town voted not to set off any portion of Williston to any other town's district, but in that same year David Isham, Daniel Isham and others asked to be put into the St. George district. The question apparently was not resolved that year since in 1831, when the town was still reworking its districts, the name Isham was again linked to a request to be transferred to another district. That same year Thomas Webb asked that his property be put into a district by itself. Such a request should not be interpreted as crankiness nor as unique.

After a new map of Willliston was made by Surveyor General John Johnson, in 1834, the town went through another round of examining its districts. (That map, by the way,

was considered such an asset that one of the first things the town did was to buy itself a fireproof box for important documents.) On this map there are sixteen districts which the people of Williston continued to readjust until around 1850, without changing the number of districts. The new map offered the advantage of making the boundaries plain along with the disadvantage of inviting people to reconsider where those boundaries were. It was District 2 that came up at the 1836 town meeting when Brigham Wright introduced a motion to change that district. He asked that it be divided to set Wright Clark in a district all to himself and that Mr. Clark be allowed to draw public money for that district. The town would not approve his motion but did go along with giving him two-thirds of the public money allowed for a school to use for a winter school at his own home. Wright Clark was finally rewarded fifteen years later in the school year of 1850-1851, the year his petition succeeded for being set off from District 2. The land between his property and the land of Giles Chittenden was to be part of Clark's district.

Williston, like other Vermont towns on the district plan, allowed each district its own school supervised by its own prudential committee. Gradually those committees had more and more influence, determining the teacher's salary and, just as important, the number of terms that individual schools were in session. A term lasted for eleven weeks and a school year of two terms was the general practice until well after 1850. When towns were rural and transportation the greatest hurdle, schools needed most of all to be convenient to where students lived. Parents did not expect to take time from what they did (mostly farming) to transport children. As a result, they preferred many tiny schools, some with only three children, so long as those schools were close by. Even the smallest school had its prudential committee providing any funds the district needed above the town allowance. In order to be taken seriously, any plea for more funds from the town had to include some idea of how the money would be raised. In this

spirit, no doubt, the dog tax came about. Frequent and lively discussion of schools encouraged the people of Williston to understand their own ability to alter school policy. The fact that so many town meetings tolerated discussion of changes in districts says that people counted those districts as important town business. A list of districts gives an idea of how much politicking went into the keeping and rearranging of schools.

Most of the information about schools comes from the period beginning in 1880, the year in which a separate report on schools appears in the record of the town meeting. One reason that we can know so much about Williston schools is that the town has had such conscientious superintendents. The records of their administrations, especially when reports include their own words, convey important differences in their personalities. Energetic and thoughtful superintendents, especially during times of difficulty, turned out to be decisive for Williston. They had personal responsibility for approving the curriculum and vouching for the fitness of every teacher hired. Teachers also left vivid records. L. W. Pape, a Williston boy who became a teacher, kept a matter of fact diary. When he went to work, he had the school superintendent show up at his house and examine him. Superintendents complained about the strain put on their integrity by that important responsibility.

The town meeting report for 1855 mentions for the first time a Superintendent of Common Schools (he was the Reverend A. D. Barber). For the next twenty-five years the superintendents' names appear but not much else. While these relatively quiet leaders officially supervised town schools, there was a stronger educational presence not within their domain.

Today when people think of Williston's educational past they will probably include Williston Academy, a private school in which the town took pride for many years. When it opened in 1829 in a building that had not been there a year earlier, it was not the only academy around. In fact a spirit of competi-

tion probably helped Williston's academy in its early years, a time when other academies perceived themselves as vying for pupils. Hinesburg Academy, incorporated in 1824, took itself seriously, and was close enough to be a rival.

In the New England tradition, Williston Academy started out linked to a church. Its first principal was the Reverend Peter Chase who had come to Williston in 1828 from Hinesburg to serve as pastor of Williston's Baptist Church. The setting and reputation of the town helped to attract students. Printed information about Williston Academy presented the town as a place where children could learn in peaceful safety. At a time when people from cities were beginning to come north for cures at mineral springs and spas, people had already learned to think of Vermont as inherently restorative. The school's location, according to its own pub-

Williston Academy opened its doors in 1829 and drew students from several states.

licity some years later, was in the pleasant and quiet village of Williston, eight miles from Burlington, and two miles from the Vermont Central Railroad:

> In regard to health, the place is very desirable; the village is entirely free from haunts of idleness and dissipation, and the location is, in every respect, favorable to good order, to mental improvement, and moral culture.

Rev. Chase bought land on the south side of what people called the Williston turnpike. On that land he built a two story building, 26 feet by 36 feet, in other words, larger than most schools in town. From the beginning the academy accepted both male and female students. It advertised that the female students were allowed to hear many of the same lectures as the male students. Other female seminaries at the time limited the curriculum for young ladies, making their preparation quite distinct from the challenging standards demanded from male students.

Staying at the school for a few years to oversee its smooth operation, when Rev. Chase left he turned the academy over to another minister, the Reverend William Arthur, who also replaced Chase as pastor of the Baptist church. Because of the early connection between Williston Academy and the Baptist congregation, it was natural that the Baptists held their services in the building that Rev. Chase built and used for the academy. As the practice became more regular and established, the one building also served as the Baptist Meeting House. No one knew it at the time, of course, but Rev. Arthur's small son, Chester A. Arthur, born in 1830, the future president of the United States, would turn out to be one of the most famous people to live in Williston. Rev. Arthur, known in Williston as the Baptist minister, had come to study the law under a Burlington attorney before turning to the ministry.

President Chester A. Arthur came to Williston as a small child when his father became headmaster of Williston Academy in the 1830's.

The successor to Rev. Arthur was not a Baptist but Williston's esteemed Congregational minister, the Reverend Josiah Goodhue. And after him, the men put in charge of the Academy were often but not always chosen from people studying for the ministry, as was Homer Benson, who took over from Goodhue. Some were preparing for the legal profession, which in those days had the formal requirement of good character and respectability, but did not require going to law school. Augustus Gould, who followed Benson, went on to become a lawyer. Then, a native of Williston, Leonard Whitney, led the Academy. The last teacher in the original building became the Reverend Bates.

As the connection to the church grew less formal and less consistent, the people of Williston saw no reason for the Academy to be in the Baptist Meeting House. But from its catalogue we know that the school claimed to emphasize a sober way of life as part of what it offered, even long after its Baptist origins were left behind. Parents who sent their children to the Academy expected a place that could promise supervision and set limits:

> That the hours of evening be properly spent by the pupil is deemed to be of special importance. Hence all are required to spend the evening at their homes, or boarding houses, and a proper amount of it in preparation of lessons for the ensuing day. In no case are students allowed to attend parties, or gatherings for amusement, during the term time: nor are they excused from their rooms at all during the evening, except it be by parental authority for the transaction of necessary business, or by special permission of the Principal.

Apparently the Academy closed altogether for a short time. An 1886 history of Chittenden County notes that "the school had been so prosperous that its loss was seriously felt

by the people of Williston." In a spirit of constructive reaction the people of Williston then built a new home for the Academy, one that was described at the time as substantial. In 1841 the town arranged for and built for the Academy a new building on a lot near the old Academy.

The first principal in the new building kept to a high standard that enhanced the reputation of the school. Mr. Emerson J. Hamilton, from the University of Vermont, Class of 1842, helped the Academy thrive, as did his successors, Mr. (later the Reverend) E. R. Lyman and then Mr. P. H. Sanford. During their years in charge enrollment sometimes reached 120 students. (At the same time some of the district schools in Williston had five students.) It was Mr. Lyman's wife, a well educated woman, who took charge of the female students as she supervised their instruction in the second story of the Academy building . When an announcement for the newly opened Williston Academy appeared in the *Burlington Free Press*, it mentioned the feature that most distinguished its offerings, the Herschelian telescope that belonged to Mr. Lyman. As often happens, the school was so successful that it outgrew its facilities. This time it was not town funds but individual subscribers who provided the capital to expand the school enough to keep up with its growing student body. That group of backers in 1859 gave $1,500, enough money to build a substantial addition.

When it reached that new scale, the Academy served an area well beyond Williston. Students came from all over Vermont, but also from the rest of New England, even some from New York and Pennsylvania. Its principals understood that they were training leaders for Vermont and the region. Parents appreciated its strong curriculum but also something else that it offered, the strict discipline that gave the school the reputation of being able to straighten out children who were even too much for their own parents. J. S. Cilley, a particularly stalwart principal, is the name most widely associated with this time of expansion and growth for Williston

Academy. People in the town thought of it as Mr. Cilley's School. His no-nonsense style of handling students must have appealed to parents because under his leadership the number of students went from 114 to a record of 140. During his years the town considered the Academy one of the important attractions that Williston could claim. That was not a mistaken perception, apparently, since many graduates of Williston Academy did go on to distinguish themselves.

Williston Academy, like the town and the nation, suffered acute losses because of the Civil War. Mr. Cilley witnessed a sad and abrupt end for some of the promising young men he had taught . A history written less than twenty-five years after the Civil War tells how Vermont remembered Mr. Cilley's graduates:

> Some of them, . . . after fighting bravely for their country, were starved in Andersonville or shot down in battle, and now sleep in the honored grave of the soldier.

In 1868 Mr. Cilley left Williston Academy to become head of a high school in Brandon. No principal after him stayed for so long or showed so personal a style of educational leadership. By 1883 the town took over the Academy as a graded school for the upper grades of the public school system.

During the years of growth and strength of the Academy, the public schools in Williston's districts experienced their own advancement, sometimes with the support of the town in spite of the attitudes of some parents. When, in 1855, the record of the town meeting mentions a superintendent of schools for the first time, it specified that Rev. A. D. Barber be the first one. Maybe voters thought that only a man of the cloth could lift the cloud of dissension that lingered over Williston that year. But he could not work miracles. For reasons that probably belong more to the history of Williston's churches than its schools, in 1855 it was hard for the towns-

people to agree on much. One hint of discord remains on the record in the fact of three town meetings that year, mostly on the subject of schools. And still the factions agreed to disagree.

> The first town meeting of 1855, the usual one, replayed an old drama. . . . After a thorough and tedious description, it was voted to reorganize School Districts throughout the town. By a vote the same meeting then appointed five people to be a committee to make a report, the same to be final and in force from date of record.

The five handed in a report in April of that year and the vote in reaction to it shows how nearly even the two sides were—70 votes to accept it, 58 to reject. That report left nothing vague. It gave a list of all residents of Williston and their grand list assets. It divided Williston into 11 districts. Even though there had been instructions about accepting what the committee did, the town met again two months later to reject the report and go back to old lines. After more discussion and more votes nothing had been settled. Finally the two sides had to agree to sit down with an arbitrator. In the end Williston created a twelfth district.

No other year comes close in its record of bad feeling, but its mystery offers a lesson about dealing with documents. Records show that the Williston Congregational church lost more members at that time than ever before or after. An outbreak of excommunications had started, too. But to link that to town meeting is only a guess. When things in the record do not add up, there is no reason to believe that Williston residents were looking for ways to waste time and every reason to believe that probably something not written down explains what lay behind all the arguing. If we think about the questions that divide towns today, it is easy to imagine a future investigator groping through written reports without under-

standing that unrecorded stands on abortion or gay rights polarize a community. Debatable ideas can slow down a community's agreement on schools, sewers or any question that requires agreement. In 1855 the question very likely had to do with views of slavery and a whole range of opinions that divided churches, views much more finely graded than merely for and against. That question belongs to a different Williston story.

A new liveliness or at least more individuality comes into town records from 1881 onward, the year that complete, signed reports from superintendents are reprinted with the report of the town meetings. (Earlier documents said only that the superintendent's report was made and accepted.) The reports that survive show not only which questions inspired debate but also the degree of personal involvement of superintendents, some of whom saw themselves as taking on factions of parents as opponents. The trouble grew out of the fact that in some farming communities, parents tended at

Pupils pose with their teachers at the District 4 school, the Muddy Brook school, the only brick schoolhouse among the twelve district schools.

times to look on their children not so much as the hope of the future but as hands able to help today. Several Williston families not only failed to insist that their children attend school, but actually kept them home. Attendance records show these attitudes lurking between the lines. Some children obviously thought of school not as part of everyday life but as a place to go one or two days a week, or maybe for the afternoon once in a while.

F. W. Olmstead, superintendent in 1881, put his foot down and refused to settle for such a casual view of education. Maybe he thought that parents needed public instruction on their duty, or maybe he wanted to embarrass them at the town meeting, but whatever his motive, Olmstead made the problem public by reading it into the record. He talked about the very culpable neglect of patrons of the schools to require children to attend school regularly.

As part of his duties Superintendent Olmstead also announced to Williston a change in the state law that would make a bigger difference for the town than anyone knew. In Vermont, as in other states, women were being allowed to have a voice in matters that were considered their business. While the public did not yet believe that women should participate in choosing a President of the United States, some states were starting to allow women to have a voice in questions related to schools because the rearing of children was within their sphere. The new state law that Olmstead mentioned specified that

> women shall have the same right to vote as men have in all school district meetings and in the election of school commissioners in towns and cities and the same right to hold office in school affairs—that women may hold the office of Town Superintendent and Town Clerk.

The second part of the law, the part about holding office, must have impressed and pleased some of the people who

heard it. Three years later Williston elected Mrs. J. C. Draper as its first female superintendent of schools, a woman who brought conscientious vitality to the job and who held the post for fifteen years, long enough to mature in her thinking as her successive reports show.

When Mrs. Draper began as superintendent some people probably found her tone at least a little bit strident or even shrill. The new superintendent must have added some spice to the town the year she made her biblical sounding pronouncement about the serious educational responsibility of parents: "He who does not send his child to school is an enemy of the State." Among her favorite causes was also the need for a high school in Williston. She saw the town make a graded school out of what had been Williston Academy, and no doubt represented other people in Williston who also experienced that change as a loss. After Mrs. Draper put that concern on the record, many superintendents after her repeated what came to sound like a refrain: money and young people were leaving Williston under a state system that required the town to pay tuition for sending students to outside high schools.

At the same time that Mrs. Draper took over as Superintendent, the state was beginning to play more of a role in overseeing schools, so Draper had to be accountable at a higher level and in a more exacting way than had been demanded by the town. In a growing list of particulars the Superintendent had to enforce state law which kept changing in the direction of more authority.

Just before Mrs. Draper took over, when E. C. S. Miller was superintendent, the state had ruled that all students were to be supplied with books. In passing this law the state acknowledged a problem that plagued teachers throughout Vermont. Of the pupils who showed up at school some brought no books at all. Now, as of 1883, the state required families to provide some kind of book to children being sent to school. That well-intentioned requirement did not go far enough, as it turned out. According to Williston school regis-

ters, for example, it was not unusual to have several children from one family in a class. It is impossible to know whether families provided each child with a book. But since the state did not specify *which* books for which students, teachers had to deal first with a variety of books in the classroom and then the inconvenience of a book that may not have matched the level of the pupil. Mrs. Draper saw this problem as well as anyone in town because she made so many visits to each school, all noted by teachers in their registers.

Soon after it passed the law that required books, the state legislature apparently learned that teachers found their solution imperfect. In the 1887-1888 school year the state took the next step and started providing books for pupils in all Vermont schools. Teachers had to keep track of these books and provide records of their distribution. The book that came first shows the concern of the legislature for Vermont's children; the subject was health. Teachers referred to these textbooks as their students' "physiologies." Not long afterward the teaching of Vermont geography became a part of the regular curriculum, followed by Vermont history. Some of these textbooks may still be consulted in the Wilbur Collection at the University of Vermont's Bailey Howe Library. One is Edward Conant's book *The Vermont Primary Historical Reader* published in 1895. Another that is mentioned by name in Williston records is by Edward Day Collins, *A History of Vermont*, published in 1903.

Here are just a few of the questions that appeared at the conclusion of Edward Conant's book:

When and by whom was Vermont first explored?
When and where was the first fort built in Vermont?
When and where was the first settlement in Vermont?
When and where was the government of Vermont first organized under the Constitution?
Who was the first governor of Vermont?
Who is the present governor?

How many post offices had Vermont when admitted to the Union? How many post offices then in the United States?
How long was Vermont an independent State before her admission to the Union?
What do you know of Benjamin Everest?
What did Judge Theophilus Harrington say that made him famous?
Bound the State of Vermont. Bound the county you live in; the town you live in.

During the years when Mrs. J. C. Draper served as superintendent the state required all Vermont towns on the district system, as Williston was, to have a vote on the question of changing to the town system. Not many years later all districts were done away with in part because they had been so numerous. At one time Vermont had 2300 districts, which meant that same number of independent local authorities for education. Williston voters understood that such a change would mean an end to the authority of prudential committees.

Marion Parker Marvin was five years old when she helped raise this flag over the Muddy Brook district school in 1910.

By the time of the vote such groups made decisions on the length of school terms, the number of terms, the salaries of teachers. They also controlled, as they always had, any additional tax or other means a district came up with to raise extra money for its school. The date of the vote for change does not appear in town records, but Williston did choose to leave behind the district system in favor of organizing schools the new way under the town system. The older members of the community remembered how much trouble districts had caused over the years.

In general the changes made in education during the years of Mrs. Draper's tenure came from the state. In the Acts of 1882 the state had provided for teachers to be allowed to count as teaching time any day they took off to attend an Institute or Educational Meeting, with the idea of improving a teacher's skill. Such a modern sounding idea may not have seemed strange in Vermont in the late 1800s, the state where the idea of special training for teachers, the Normal School, originated in 1829. (In that same proud tradition it was Samuel Read Hall, a Vermonter, who wrote *Lectures on School Keeping* in 1829, the first book of its kind in America.) Williston's school registers, separate annual notebooks kept for each school, show that teachers from the town did make the effort and attended teacher institute sessions.

The biggest change that Williston experienced during the 1880s was the shift in the length of the school year from two terms to three, a difference of eleven weeks of instruction. Gradually by 1888 most schools—all but District 12—had changed to three terms. That decision had its practical as well as its philosophical side because it meant that teachers, who were paid by the term, would stand to earn fifty percent more than they had received. The sums of money appear very small, but in an economy in which cash was not essential, people needed less. The record shows that in 1826, for example, teachers were paid $35 for an eleven -week term. Women teachers, who became the majority, were paid $25 for

the same period but were also provided with board by families who lived near the school. By 1885 the lowest paid teacher earned only $27.50 for eleven weeks. When the state started to require towns to pay the board of the teacher, the practice was to auction to the lowest bidder the business of boarding the teacher, but no record of such dealings appear in the school register. Older members of the Williston community still remember the practice of "boarding round" for women teachers. No one wrote it down for the record, but it is easy to imagine that the comings and goings of young unmarried women also enriched local resources for gossip. Later on male teachers boarded as well.

The well-meaning efforts of the state to require books helped teachers to move in the direction of a more regular curriculum and probably improved the general level of classroom discipline. But none of these changes made any difference at all to the Williston children who simply did not attend school. That problem did not get better as the years passed, the way that we might expect in the nineteenth-century spirit of progress and betterment. In 1886 the record shows that 20% of Williston children did not attend school. By 1898 the proportion had changed to 25% . But in the next generation of children and Superintendents, schools would face new kinds of menace.

The trend of encouraging teachers to improve meant that superintendents took it upon themselves to be watchful. Superintendent Jackson Miller let teachers know that one of their duties was to teach pupils to be prompt. The teacher had to report to the state how many instances of tardiness there were in her whole school for the year. We can see how seriously teachers regarded their tallying of absence and tardiness by the conscientious and minute fractions they wrote down to record average daily attendance. Exotic figures appear such as 8 339/358 (eight and three hundred thirty-nine three hundred fifty-eighths) or 5 79/83 (five and seventy-nine eighty-thirds). Miller's concern reminds us of the plain moral

emphasis that belonged to educational philosophy: If allowed to come into school late they soon acquire the habits of indolence which will follow them through life. The idea of moral education also reminds us of Vermont's most famous educator, John Dewey (1859-1952), a Burlington native whose radical reform of educational thinking eventually reached over the whole world.

Superintendent Alonzo Chase repeated the concern shown by Mrs. Draper about sending students away from town for high school:

> It is to be regretted that so many people send their children, who are hardly fitted for academic studies, out of town to school, whereas, if they would only agree to subsidize our home school, as they mutually do the out-of-town institutions when they pay the tuitions, we might have here in our own village, a school thoroughly equipped with all needful apparatus, nicely graded, and under the direction of the best teachers. With proper encouragement by the people there is no reason why a high school cannot be maintained in town equal to the best. (February 14, 1900)

Teachers did not have an easy time with Chase's successor, Mr. W. H. Crawford, who took the unusual step of providing the town with a comment on each teacher. But he also understood that teachers needed help:

> I think in every case the teachers have tried to render their best service, and where the best results have not been reached, quite as much blame may be due to the parents, who have failed to co-operate with the teachers. (Superintendent's Report, 1901).

And when teachers and parents together were not enough, the superintendent asked for help. The record confirms Crawford's no-nonsense attitude toward school business in the number of times he used the truant officer. Meanwhile Williston kept trying to have a kind of high school, the two-year kind.

Parents felt nervous about some of the ideas of Superintendent Carlton Howe because his thinking seemed more progressive than that of other teachers. They were right in that judgment, but Howe also understood where state laws were headed before legislation caught up with his insights. He worried about the physical condition of school buildings, for example, before the state started proposing its own guidelines. The reports he wrote did not sound like previous ones because he included details about out-buildings (outdoor toilets) that were unsanitary, deplorable and disgusting. It was Howe who thought that both Stovepipe Corner and French Hill Schools should be closed. He wanted their students to go to the village and attend the graded school.

Early in the twentieth century Superintendent Howe expressed ideas that would still sound modern many decades later:

> Anyone who understands the situation at all does not question the fact that pupils in a good graded school receive incomparably better training and instruction than those in an ungraded district school.

One of his innovations was to go along with a program being promoted by the state to include agriculture in the school curriculum. With his encouragement an impressive number of Williston students, sixty-five in all, took part in a contest in raising corn. Winners claimed prizes both for the best looking corn and for producing the highest yield.

For all his progressive thinking, Superintendent Howe appreciated the value of sometimes using the past for his rationale. He wanted the town to look at its educational heritage, to revere and maintain the past excellent record of the old Academy. But he also repeated the practical argument about sending money away: Williston will be giving $500 to other towns to educate its children to stay away from their native town.

Today we may read Superintendent Howe's reports and see signs of his integrity, but the Williston school board did not admire his blunt assessments. When he saw schools that did not measure up to state recommendations he said so, knowing that the school board did not welcome reports of shortcomings. One state law required every school to fly an American flag, but only one Williston school had a flag and a pole that worked. (The photo of the flag at Muddy Brook School shows what must have been that one proud flag.)

When the state moved in the direction of health, the school board liked even less hearing about it from Howe. The particular regulation had to do with drinking water in the classroom. In small rural schools it had traditionally been the duty of two big boys to take a bucket to a nearby brook, fill it and bring it back for the class. Usually there was a cup to be shared and used as a dipper. Now the State Board of Health ruled that the traditional and unsanitary practice had to stop. Either students would have to bring their own cups or else the school would provide enough cups to make sure each pupil had one. Williston was not observing that law and Superintendent Howe said so in writing. A stiff written comment from the school board made it plain that Mr. Howe was not going to be allowed to keep on writing embarrassing reports:

> We would suggest that it is the duty of the superintendent—or if not, it should be his duty, to confer with the school directors in regard to matters within their province to repair.

World War I touched the Williston community at every level, reaching well beyond the families who sent men to the army. The schools immediately felt the shortage of teachers but had the excellent guidance of Superintendent Minnie E. Hays, a lively and thoughtful administrator. Her strong personality comes through in the language of her reports, which could not be mistaken for the work of any other superintendent. When she came to the office of superintendent she had to deal with the special pressures, material and emotional, that came from the fact of war. The war gave Williston and probably the whole country an acute awareness of being American. In the school record we notice that flags were now flown daily and children said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minnie E. Hays helped the school system situate itself in the outside world that suddenly demanded to be acknowledged, even inside the small and safe world of the classroom. Her outlook was above all practical. More than previous superintendents she seems to have understood how to integrate the work of schools into concerns of the town by using the schools to offer instruction meant to help the entire community. Her terse lists tell a great deal of what went on:

> The activities which have been beneficial to the school system are: thrift, the school banking work, precautionary health measures, especially that of oiling all school room floors and the introduction of hot school lunches, . . . the promotion of war activities: viz., agriculture, conservation and preservation of foods, knitting, selling of thrift stamps and all work of the Red Cross society. (Superintendent's Report, 1918)

That year Williston had five schools, with an average of ten pupils. Because the war made it more difficult to find enough teachers, the law of supply and demand required the schools to pay higher salaries. Williston paid $4962.50 to seven and a half teachers. The state had also begun to help

towns with salaries; the amount the town received depended on the qualifications of its teachers. Superintendent Hays favored consolidation because a two-teacher school gives, in every way, better service, and the expense is reduced amazingly.

Before the town could respond to that advice, events took over and a different aspect of school life dominated everyone's thinking. In the school year that began in 1918 health and hygiene took over as the main concerns because of the great influenza epidemic. In her report filed in February 1919, Minnie E. Hays tells that influenza closed the schools for weeks. It removed from our midst some of the most promising students. That year there were health checks in the schools. When the Superintendent reported the findings she also made a connection between Williston's children and problems of the larger society.

> In the eye, ear and throat tests, given this autumn, 38 pupils were found defective. This condition is startling. Not more so, however, than the condition of men found in drafting for the army. One in every six examined was unfit for military service. The greatest consideration should be given to the physical well-being of the young. (Superintendent's Report, February 1, 1919)

This period of rigorous trial did not drive Minnie E. Hays from her position as superintendent, and did not make her resent having to adapt to new limits. As reports show, she adjusted well because she managed to analyze the changes in a constructive spirit:

> We may never hope, due to the scarcity of teachers, to reopen all the rural schools of the town, and even if teachers could be found, the salaries of teachers are to be such that transportation is the

> most economical means of furnishing the child advantages not possible in the small rural school. There is a stimulus to progress where there is competition and rivalry. This stimulus is lacking in the small rural school. (Superintendent's Report, 1920)

That combination of idealism and practicality marks her approach to her duties. Her belief in the importance of a stimulus to progress helps explain her organizing a town writing contest to be judged by outsiders and also a spelling contest. After the war her zeal seems not to have flagged. Her reports show a concern that had not appeared earlier. The price of paper rose beyond all reckoning. A 500-sheet package of arithmetic paper that sold for $.07 before the war now cost $.70, a tenfold increase. Predictably, wood for heat cost more than ever. Thanks to her attention to practical matters we know these homely facts that must have been felt elsewhere in Williston.

The town of Williston even beyond the school system needed encouragement during World War I, and Superintendent Hays arranged help of the most practical kind for the entire community, as this note in the school register of 1916-1917 suggests:

> Miss Dutton from the U.V.M. under the patronage of Superintendent Miss Hays gave a demonstration in preserving and canning to girls of the school and to the ladies of the community.

During those same years the state government exerted more and more authority in education especially on the subject of school buildings. In the early 1920s there are signs of a very large and coordinated effort statewide to improve the environment of learning. Behind it seems to have been an attempt to cut down the number of small and inadequate rural schools. Williston with its on-again off-again little schools felt

Stovepipe Corners School is now a museum on the village green beside the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library. It closed in 1929.

the influence of the state. Two names associated with this effort from outside Williston are Carl Batchelder from the State Department of Education and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, another strong proponent.

The state guidelines about school buildings did not leave much to interpret. The state gave explicit standards and spelled out a rating system. A list described what an ideal school would have and then reality entered the picture. If a school came up to 75% of that listing, the state gave it a plaque described as being like a license plate on a car with the word Standard on it, to put up on the lintel over the entry to the school. Any school that measured up to 90% of the same index was classified as Superior with a plaque that said so. The state's aim in starting this program was to improve school buildings by encouraging help from towns, and it worked.

Parents' organizations got together the money to make the changes that the state required or made schools aspire to. The people of Williston used the very sensible plan of concentrating each year on bringing one school up to the level that the state called Standard. They started with North Williston where the school was awarded its plaque in 1922. The next year that same distinction went to Muddy Brook School. Sometimes it took more than one year to bring a school to that same point. So much work had to be done on Lamson School that it took two years to make it whole. (Holes in its floorboards left some students with their feet resting on dirt before the repairs were made.) In 1926 Lamson School won its plaque. The state allowed for special recognition when an extraordinary effort was made to meet its guidelines. When the Lake Iroquois School made it to Standard in 1925 it also won $100 and a citation called the Proctor Prize for being the most improved of any school in Chittenden County. Williston records show some of what it took and the scale of cooperation involved: two teams of horses and eight men worked to move stones, smooth the ground and dig ditches.

The town avoided the trap of complacency and kept working to improve other schools. The Oak Hill School must have looked beautiful when it was acknowledged by the state as Standard in 1928 with its new slate blackboards, new hardwood floors and even window shades, whose mention tells that they impressed taxpayers. Other small changes that people recorded as improvements strike us for their simplicity, things like pictures on the wall or having a mirror.

Williston succeeded in bringing all the schools up to Standard, some close to Superior rating. But the town made the decision that some schools were so far below the state's requirements that to close them down made more sense than spending the considerable sum it would take for the mandated improvements. For that reason Sucker Hollow School along with French Hill and Stovepipe Corners School closed.

The strong leadership of Minnie E. Hays during World War I continued to help Williston in its period of activity in the 1920s. One fact on the record which attracts no comment is the steep increase in the superintendent's annual salary in the years right after the departure of Miss Hays. The Superintendent's salary in 1924 was $244.92 and in only five years climbed to $581.86. Edward Clark served only a short time as superintendent before turning the job over to Merle Willis, who supervised a district that included besides Williston the town of Bolton and another district (Washington West) made up of Waterbury, Moretown and other towns.

Gradually, the emphasis shifted to teacher qualifications, following an old Vermont tradition. People in Williston may or may not have appreciated the fact that in the 1930s Vermont's rural schools were considered the best in the United States. At that time Vermont's Commissioner of Education was also the president of the Rural Department of the National Education Association. Another distinction that may or may not be related to that one appears in a well-regarded book *Let Me Show You Vermont* by E.D. Crane, written in 1937: during the depression Vermont did not close a

school for want to funds to keep it open, and not a teacher was defrauded of her wages.

One young graduate of the University of Vermont, Bartley J. Costello, who would later serve more than forty years as a partner in Webber, Costello & Chapman in Rutland, first made his mark on Williston not as a lawyer but as the teacher at Muddy Brook School. The year he graduated, 1936, meant that the memory and the reality of the Depression had barely begun to fade. Costello remembers, as do many Vermonters, that there was still not much money around, but people found ways even when means stayed slim. Between his college graduation and the beginning of the school year, for example, Costello worked in a Rutland service station pumping gas—in the days before pumps marked Self—and was paid $22 a week. The season in Rutland did not last much past summer in those days because at the end of summer the people all went home or back to where money came from. And skiing did not really exist yet in a way that did much for the economy of Rutland. Besides, with his B.A. in Education, Costello had a commitment to teach in Vermont for one year, as was done back then. Williston, as it turned out, did well because of that arrangement.

When young Costello started at Muddy Brook as the teacher of all eight grades in the one room that was the school, his pay was $18 per week. He had earned better money pumping gas. From his teaching salary he paid board at the Johnson farm, which came to $5, and still had to find other arrangements on the week ends. Long before 1936 teachers had been boarding a Johnson's, located near Muddy Brook School. Because Costello's mother had been widowed, he sent her $10 from his weekly salary. The $3 that remained let him go to Burlington most week ends where he could "spend it recklessly."

Many tiny facts that Costello recalls about the way of life sound like what other Williston residents can recall about the 1930s. Not the most important but one that people remem-

ber is the primitive plumbing. At the other extreme, the benefits of technology on the Johnson farm centered around the telephone. Young Costello watched while he ate his supper by himself, before the mealtime of the family and the hired man. The telephone would ring and Mrs. Johnson, in the spirit of wanting to help out if anyone needed it, would pick up and benefit from the party line. The call had not been for her and she never said a word, just listened. (Some Vermonters confess to this obsolete form of social curiosity as the way they used to "rubber.")

At Muddy Brook School, Mr. Costello did more than instruct. He started the fire in the woodstove that had to be lit most mornings of the year. Of his thirty-five students, from kindergarten through eighth grade, Costello remembers the fourth grader who was taller than the teacher. That particular fourth grader, age fourteen, intended to stay in school for two more years when he would have the legal right to leave. Of the children in the school at least a few spoke French at home. Costello had to deal with the way some of those children wanted to use their language. One day as he wrote at the blackboard, he heard someone in the class giving an unkind assessment of the teacher—in French. Without actually saying anything, Costello answered by writing on the board his French answer to what he heard.

As a new teacher Costello prepared lessons in a highly conscientious way. He remembers that he spent a lot of time making things organized in advance. At the beginning of the school day, before the students arrived, he would write on the blackboard the assignments for all the children for the day. The young teacher before long used a technique that saved other teachers charged with teaching eight grades. For some parts of the day he had older children help younger ones.

Children in rural schools concerned the State of Vermont as much as any other children, in questions of their education and preparation for life. In the spring Costello remembers the testing team from the University of Vermont who showed up

and spent two days assessing the level of his students and their instruction. Years later he still felt satisfaction in remembering that those Williston students showed the testers that they were two grade levels beyond what was expected of them.

One generation later a younger Costello, the son of the teacher turned lawyer, showed up in Williston. At the time the young man was finishing up his senior year at St. Michael's College. During that year he lived and worked in Williston in an arrangement that let him help out on the Billy La Casse farm. The farm could use the help of a young man and La Casse recognized the name Costello as that of the man who had been his teacher for a year at Muddy Brook School, back when there was one. Costello, as well as La Casse and many others felt that they were losing something when the building was torn down.

Even with school registers and state statistics as guides, nothing comes close to a personal account for conveying what schools were like in earlier times. One Williston teacher has given in her own words an account of her day-to-day experience at the Lamson School from 1937 to 1939. Leota Pillsbury describes daily practices that no superintendent ever thought to record:

> There were approximately fourteen or fifteen children in grades one through eight, with one or two in each grade. A class of twenty was a large class....The school day began at 9:00 A.M. and the first one in the building built the fire in the wood stove. Cleaning was done by one of the more conscientious children who was hired for the job. The teacher kept the school clock synchronized with that of the nearest neighbor, and water was brought from the same neighbor by the eighth grade boys. Inside chemical toilets were available. Many of the children brought potatoes from home and these

were cooked ahead of time on the jacket stove to provide a hot lunch. Later, nearby mothers brought hot dishes for lunch. The school day ended at 2:00 for the younger children, who waited on the playground until the older ones were finished at 3:00.

The curriculum consisted of the three R's, geography, history, and nature study. Music and art were offered if the teacher desired it and was sufficiently skillful. There was no formal physical education other than the organized games at recess time. The school was considered the center of entertainment for the neighborhood. As always, Christmas was the big program, and for many families the school tree took the place of a family tree, and children often received their family gifts at the school party. And, of course, Santa Claus came!

The charm of small schools convinced many Vermonters of the 1930s that such remainders of an older way of life should be preserved, and the state should be proud of country schools. The Vermont legislature fought hard to preserve the rural character of rural schools, to the point of turning down hundreds of thousands of dollars proposed as a gift to create one central college in Burlington for training teachers. The farmer-dominated legislature voted to preserve Vermont's system of several normal schools as a better way of preparing teachers for its many rural schools. But the trend toward consolidation grew in momentum until it could not be resisted.

Superintendent Albert D. Lawton watched consolidation happen when Williston, Essex and Westford were all in his charge. He knew first hand that finding teachers willing to accept the isolation of rural schools was becoming more difficult. One of Williston's oldest problems still plagued Lawton, namely the inequality of size—leaving aside the question of quality—between the Village School with seven-

ty-five students crowded into a small space, and the tiny outlying schools. Eventually the new Williston Central School helped to transcend such old problems as having to maintain small school buildings in disrepair. Consolidation also appeared a modern solution because it took advantage of the fact of better transportation.

But while the town pondered the merits of a consolidated school the larger world intruded with World War II. Just as had happened in the previous Great War, the town felt the shortage of teachers. Even people who had stopped teaching agreed to return to the classroom, a gesture that in some cases allowed schools to stay open. As the was was ending, Williston returned to the unresolved question of a central school and called a special town meeting on July 12, 1945. That session resulted in a committee asked to consider sites for a new school, a consolidated one.

An accident forced the town to make a decision it had been thinking about for some time. On January 18, 1949 the Academy building which was being used for the Village School burned to the ground. The following summer the town bought the land for the present Williston Central School. To finish out the year after the fire and until a new school could be built, the lower grades met in the Town Hall and the seventh and eighth grades met in the town clerk's office. The price that Williston paid for the land in the summer of 1949 was $2500 (Bonds were issued for $101,481.13 at 2.5% interest.).

The next few important developments in the creation of Williston Central School took less time than seems likely or possible today. Once the town decided that it needed an eight-room school the contract was awarded in December of 1949 for work that started just a few months later in April of 1950. And in the 1950-51 school year the building was ready to be used.

For the first time, teachers had the luxury of having to teach only one grade in one room. Given that fundamental

Williston Central School.

change in their universe, they could now think about curriculum in a different way. The school day could have more structure when teachers did not have to assign work to students in order to free themselves to instruct other students at a different level, possibly in a different subject.

Williston Central School got started when another important stage of growth was starting to appear, the postwar Baby Boom. As parents in Williston watched their families grow, the town watched Central School try to keep up with the years when a bubble of children moved through the population. Three important additions to Williston Central School showed an attempt to keep up with that growth. Two classrooms and an auditorium were added in 1955; only a few years later six more classrooms and finally an addition of twenty classrooms in 1968. Of course Williston was growing, too, as families moved into the town, families with children.

The rapid progress of planning then building the elementary school does not match what happened in dealing with secondary education. Towns around Williston built high schools as they grew, yet Williston never built its own. The

old solution of paying tuition to the towns whose high schools were used might not continue to work, some Williston residents feared. If, for example, those towns decided not to make their high schools available, then the problem would be acute. When the dangers of a town having no high school were investigated, then causes for concern only grew. It was found that in towns without a high school of their own, only about 50% of students attended high school. Meanwhile, the tuition that Williston paid to neighboring towns increased significantly.

In 1950 Wlliston appointed a committee to study the creation of a union high school as a solution to its problem. The towns being considered as members of a group with Williston were: Colchester, Essex, Jericho, Richmond, Underhill and Underhill Independent District. The site being considered was near Essex Junction. This hypothetical school was expected to enroll some 600 students by 1965. But that was only a plan.

The town considered the possibility of such a school, but also looked at other solutions, such as adding a ninth grade to its Central School. In this interim, still without reaching a decision about a union, Williston could send its high school students to South Burling High School, which opened in 1961. Williston had to pay tuition to the town of South Burlington for each student it sent, of course. It was understood that the arrangement would serve as a temporary measure. The school board made its recommendation in 1962: Williston should join Hinesburg, Richmond and Shelburne to make a union. Later the makeup of the union changed so that the new district made formal in June 1962 included Hinesburg, Williston, Shelburne and Charlotte. In July of 1963 Williston became an official part of that district. Its school, the Champlain Valley Union High School, opened in September 1964.

Unlike some other towns Williston recognized the link between town growth and the need for schools. In 1993

Williston stopped granting approvals to new residential subdivisions until the town approved the building of a new school. Overcrowding at Central School had come to that point and the Planning and Zoning Office saw a way to face the problem. The school that was approved, Allen Brook School, already known as the blue school, was finished in December 1996 and opened to students in January 1997. Approximately 420 students attend the town's newest school, in grades from pre-school to fourth grade. It is organized on the multi-age model, as is the Williston Central School. Both use teams of teachers. These are the only two public schools in Williston.

Buildings do not mark or memorialize the strength of Williston's past and present support for its schools, not in the way that church buildings make statements about the town's religious history. In the Town Hall the familiar Schoolhouse Quilt records the names of Williston schools that have passed into town folklore. Fewer and fewer people know where the fabled one-room schools used to be, but people have heard the names of Muddy Brook School, Sucker Hollow and Stovepipe Corner. They pass by the proof of good schools in Williston, drive right past it on the way to Williston Central School. The filled parking spaces in front of Dorothy Alling

Allen Brook School.

Library tell something important about what Williston's schools have done for the community. Look at the parking lot day or night and you will know that Williston is full of people who love to read, who want to keep up on things, who make an effort to see that their children care about books, too. The fact that Williston has done so well in preserving the bricks and mortar part of its heritage belongs to the story of schools that have taught and still teach Vermont history to Vermont schoolchildren. In Williston, schools have been carrying that particular torch since at least the 1880s, when the state began providing books, and maybe even before that.

Williston's public schools educate the majority of Williston children. Several schools offer programs that are more specialized. The Pine Ridge School, founded in 1968, offers the unusual ratio of one teacher for every two of its students. Making the most of that high proportion of faculty, the school offers tutorial instruction to its students, an advantage to students who experience learning disorders, including dyslexia. Because it is a boarding school, Pine Ridge is alel to organize an exensive physical education program and opportunities for its students to work at volunteer service. Their mission extends beyond academic training.

The Stern Center for Language and Learning, another specialized school in Williston, helps students who have trouble with reading. Through private support the center also offers training to all teachers, kindergarten through third grade, to prepare them to help students in the public schools of Williston or other communities.

Schools, the library and the past are all associated in Williston, not in any figurative way but in fact. There is the wooden Stovepipe Corner School, moved far from the crossroads where it used to be, now almost in the shadow of a newer school and a library. The nearby Dorothy Alling Library looks like its big sister, its protector. And of course it is. The documents and books in the library preserve the record of how that school belongs to Williston. In the way that

farm families had to choose to make the sacrifice of sending useful children to school, busy families today choose to take the time to encourage their children to use the library. Even a short look at that old schoolhouse gives a good idea of the shocking plainness of what waited for children. Imagine the room full. All the children were not the same age or even close, certainly not the same size. Some towered over the teacher. Not everyone had a book. Many came to school after they had already been up and working for hours. But someone taught them to count time spent in school as not wasted because it would make a difference to their lives and maybe even for Williston.

Historic School Buildings of Williston

Early in the history of the town, in the same years that Williston Academy was growing and later waning, the public schools in Williston also felt the stimulus of being in a town known as a good setting for a serious school. People interested in Williston's many small schools find an uneven history of schools being opened and later closed, some to be reopened. Thanks to the Williston Historical Society, and the particular efforts of Esther Urie, the modern summary that follows offers a clear account of what happened to the buildings . For understanding the relation of the town to the schools, the best written record still belongs to the Town Clerk's Office.

District 1: Village School Not used after 1883, the year when Williston Academy became the graded school. The school was at the western end of the town, and may have been opposite the property owned by Charles and Leota Pillsbury.

District 2: North Williston. Destroyed by fire some time before 1855, then replaced and used until 1951. After the old building burned, a new one was built on land on what is now Fay Lane, land that Alvah Bushnell gave. The school has been converted into a residence.

District 3: Talcott School. Closed some time around 1876. This school was in the building to the north of the Federated Church on North Williston Road. It was owned by Emerson Miles.

District 4: Muddy Brook School. Used as a school from around 1836 until 1951. In the 1830s the building was used for Methodist services. It was the only brick school building in town and was considered a large school.

District 5: Lake Iroquois School. This school closed briefly from 1876 to 1879. Closed in 1951. It was converted to use as a residence.

District 6: Oak Hill School: Once located on land later owned by Dr. Engisch. In 1952 Charles Hammond bought the school and had it moved to Essex Junction, to 20 Jackson Street.

District 7: French Hill School: Williston records show this school as early as 1860. It closed and reopened several times between 1909 and 1921 before being finally closed in 1932. It overlooked Route 2 at French Hill. Nothing of it remains.

District 8: Lamson School: In Williston records from 1852. Between 1895 and 1909 it was closed and finally closed in 1951. Louis Recor bought the school and lived in it until 1984 when IBM acquired it. No trace of the school remains.

District 9 and District 10: Sucker Hollow School. The two districts combined early. (No record exists for a school belonging only to District 9.) The school is recorded from 1875 up until 1929, the year it closed. Al Pillsbury bought the building in 1948 and later sold it to Roy Gover.

District 11: Mud Pond School. The school closed in 1909. It was on land now known as Klean Moss property, named for a business venture.

District 12: Stovepipe Corner School. On the record from 1858, the school closed in 1929. It is the only Williston school still standing in its original structure. For many years

The Stovepipe Corners school was boarded up for years before the Williston History Society raised funds to restore it.

Lake Iroquois school, built on a corner of the Isham farm, served the St. George district from the 1870's until 1951.

North Williston school also remained in use until 1951 when it was closed after a century's service.

Leota Pillsbury posed with her pupils at the Lamson School where she taught from 1937 to 1939.

it could be seen at the corner of Mountain View and North Williston Road. After being moved from that corner, it now stands on property west of Dorothy Alling Library.

CHAPTER FOUR

Educating the Spirit

The village of Williston, the brick buildings full of what people now call character, functioned for a long time as the magnet that could draw together the people who paid Williston taxes and thought of themselves as living in Williston. In that part of town, probably no structures define the place as a New England village as much as do the churches. A sign declares that one is the Old Brick Church and just as plainly the steeple of the Federated Church proclaims that this building could be nothing else. But more buildings than those two have served Williston as churches in the past. Some have been converted to other use and some have vanished altogether. Architecture tells part of the story of the importance of churches but only one part.

A church is a group of people before it is a building, and that was true in Williston. The story of Williston's churches is older than any of the buildings and livelier and more full of controversy and politics than their serene facades let on. It may be true that the Federated Church resulted from a merger of two groups but the record shows that before that peaceful settlement the town had known variety and dissent among

believers. Seen in relation to town life, these differences did not especially disrupt things, yet did mark a period of rich ferment and dialogue. The vitality of the dialogue tells us how much the religious life of the town mattered to its people.

By state law every township in Vermont had to set aside land not only for the building of a church but also land to provide income for a church. Generations of Vermont schoolchildren know this thanks to their textbook, *A History of Vermont*, written by Edward Day Collins (1903). By definition a township was six miles square made up of 70 rights or lots. Five of these lots were supposed to be reserved for public use. This meant that income from the land was earmarked even if the land itself was not used directly by its beneficiaries. Three of these reserved lots could be called educational: one for the support of a college, one for a county grammar school and one for an English school. Two others had religious designations: one for the support of preaching and the other for the first settled minister.

This describes what the State of Vermont required but Williston of course existed even before Vermont was a state. Its original guidelines came from the grant made by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth, a royal governor of a regime in which religion was the established religion of the British crown. The original charter assigns ownership of land and also shows the relation of church and state:

> His Excellency Benning Wentworth, Esq., a Tract of Land to contain five hundred Acres as marked BW in the Plan, which is to be accounted two of the within shares.
> One whole share for the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.
> One share for a Glebe for the Church of England as by Law Established.
> One Share for the first Settled Minister of the Gospel and

One Share for the Benefit of a School in said town.

Thanks to the foresight and literacy of Williston's early settlers there are written records of town meetings from a very early date. Those citizens wrote down the mundane particulars of what they talked about and what they voted on. From town records, even before there were church records of any kind, comes plain proof that Williston's early settlers included religion in their list of immediate concerns. Part of the business of the second town meeting in 1787, for example, was the election of two tithingmen, Felix Auger and Lemuel Winslow. Then in March 1788 the town meeting chose Amos Brownson, Jonathan Spafford and Asa Brownson as 'a committee to see if they can join Jericho and Essex to hire a Minister for Six months or to hire a Minister for this Town for three months, the committee to hire a Minister with Country produce.'

Beginning the next year the town meeting was organized into a morning and an afternoon session. The morning was for general business but in the afternoon a new moderator took charge and the work changed to that of an ecclesiastical society. Their important work in 1789 was to hire a minister on probation for settlement. By the terms of the charter land was reserved for a settled minister, but not for a minister who was merely hired, before he made it through the trial period and won the approval and acceptance of the town.

Williston wanted religious instruction and decided to send out for it before any church was built. In other words, they understood the essence of a church to be the group of people, so the town saw no reason to wait for a building. In the afternoon session of the 1789 town meeting the people present voted

> that the meeting for public worship shall be holden one half of the time at the House of Nathan Allen and the other Half at the House of Mr. Waldron. Voted that meetings particularly when we have preaching shall be holden at the House of Nathan

> Allen the one half and at the House of Mr. Waldron or in Mr. Auger's Barn the other half.

Besides the early records, there is the work of scholars who have taken a special interest in this aspect of Williston's life and past. Aimee Angus Barber wrote a master's thesis in 1940 for the Hartford School of Religious Education of the Hartford Seminary Foundation on "A History of the Religious Life of Williston, Vermont." In a thorough piece of research, Barber made use of town records and also of the archives of the Congregational Church and Society (made available to her by Sylvia Warren) and the records of other churches. For the early period, Barber found that in religion as in so many areas of Williston life, Connecticut provided leadership. The General Association sent missionaries from Connecticut, the home state of the Chittendens, the Spaffords and other early Williston settlers, up to Vermont to investigate the quality of religious life. The men sent to Vermont were not necessarily looking to be hired by Vermont churches but were ministers who had their own Connecticut churches that gave them leaves for a term of four months to let them go missionating.

One Connecticut missionary who came to Vermont wrote an account of his 1789 trip that was not published until the 1920s. Its author, the Reverend Nathan Perkins, was a Princeton graduate and product of the famous preachers of the Great Awakening, an unusually significant religious revival that changed the lives of many Americans, including Perkins himself, who went through a spiritual crisis before he perceived himself as saved. People who knew him described the minister as full of self-dignity, without humor and changed by an inheritance that gave him more of an independent air than he would otherwise have possessed. Even though Perkins was free to stay away from Connecticut for four months, as it turned out he spent only three months. His comments about Vermont suggest that he found it easy to leave. When he wanted to pay a compliment to the future

prospects of the frontier state—so far behind his home in degree of civilization—he said that the body of the people will be like Connecticut.

Anyone looking for amusing if acerbic comments about early Vermont will be rewarded by skimming Perkins's book. But taken as a whole his account shows a homesick man who did not enjoy travel in general and whose overall impression was that God had been very good to him by allowing him to live in Connecticut—and not Vermont. His frequent remark that he had only brook water to drink suggests that he missed having something stronger, which he apparently counted among the fruits of civilized society. And his reputed humorless character shows up in what looks like his failure to see that some frugal Vermonters tricked him. His description of a famine, the first he had ever seen, sounds a lot like tricks played by natives on anthropologists and other outsiders. Women and children told Perkins and convinced him that they had eaten nothing in over ten days. But maybe they invented a reason for not inviting the self-important critic to stay to dinner. According to Perkins there was no good food to be had once he left Connecticut. The word miserable is one of his favorites.

On the subject of religion in Williston, Perkins is no more optimistic than he is about Vermont in general:

> Thursday 20 of May set out for Williston where governor Chittenden lives.—baptised five children, rode through the woods, 14 miles, the riding as bad as it could be, almost half of the trees in the woods blown down by the violence of the wind last year.

His visit with Chittenden left Perkins as unimpressed as he must have expected to be. After seeing Jericho, Essex and Colchester he speculated about the potential of the church in Vermont.

> Scarcely any politeness in the State—Scarcely any sensible preaching—will soon settle Ministers in most of the towns . . . Some of our Ministers from Connecticut disesteemed, because injudicious—about one tenth part of the State quakers and Anabaptist—Episcopalians, and universalists; and a 1/4 deists.
>
> Even if the people of Vermont had far to go in their march toward the plateau achieved by Perkins' home state, they did have enough sense to let him know how much they enjoyed his preaching. This fact is known to history only because Perkins himself preserved their enthusiastic reactions. He notes that the people of Williston bestowed encomiums which it would be vain in me to repeat. Then, he repeats them: "Such as the very first-rate—philosophical—Deep—penetrating—a great Scholar—angelic—The angel Gabriel could not go before him—no wonder his people admire him, and such like praises."

Nathan Perkins noted that in the sermon he preached in Williston he opposed deists. As a minister he knew that the future of church membership everywhere was at risk with the growth of this group who thought of themselves equally as thinkers and as believers. Depending on rational principles, deists held that Nature itself made the existence of God so plain that there had never been any need for divine revelation. Logically, they reasoned, since this was true then no one needed formal religion because churches served no purpose. One name eventually associated with deism was Thomas Jefferson who had come into contact with such ideas in France where deists approved of the French Revolution. But Perkins probably had in mind another proponent of such principles. Ethan Allen, whose grave Nathan Perkins visited, inspired in the Connecticut missionary something less than admiration, according to his travel diary:

> Arrived at *Onion-river* falls and passed by Ethan Allen's grave. An awful Infidel, one of the wickedest men that ever walked this guilty globe. I stopped and looked at his grave with a pious horror.

So much for the view of deists in the eyes of a Connecticut Congregationalist. Fortunately Williston had more spiritual substance than Nathan Perkins had noticed or predicted. The town soon turned its mind to spiritual life, but for years before Williston gathered to worship in a church its residents had to face and to solve problems that might not have slowed down a Connecticut town. By 1790 Williston had voted to build its Publick Meeting House which was to belong to no single denomination in particular, and would serve civic purposes—such as town meeting—along with religious. With churches as with schools, Williston people knew that an institution had to be convenient in order to work. The innocent-sounding notion of wanting to locate it at the center of town changed Williston forever.

That practical and reasonable notion created problems because in fact Williston had two centers. One, where the existing village now stands, had the disadvantage of being only one mile from the western edge of Williston—at the time. The other center would in time not be part of Williston. The people in the eastern part of the original town petitioned the legislature to be split off from Williston because the Richmond area was too far from the church. Seeing the difficulty of locating a meeting house at the center of town, Williston voted to divide itself for church purposes into two groups, the East Society and the West Society. Eventually these society boundaries would redefine Williston.

When the West Society decided to locate its boundary at Muddy Brook, the change required taking a piece of Burlington. At the eastern edge, moving to the new boundary meant giving up ten thousand acres that were later combined with pieces of Huntington and Jericho to form the new town

of Richmond. That had been the East Society. In its new shape the township of Williston corresponded to the West Society. The town was more or less its original size, with one boundary moved three miles to the west. The process of declaring the two church societies to be two distinct towns started in the 1792 Town Meeting. It took the Vermont General Assembly until October 1794 to make the change official. So Williston took shape as part of deciding where to put a meeting house large enough to hold the entire town.

After the town was divided, the work became simpler. Now the West Society could turn over its books to the town. The Meeting House, after all, was intended for civic purposes as well as religious. The vote to build came in 1796 and included its dimensions, given first as 56 by 50 feet, then changed by extending the length four more feet. Money would come from selling pews on the ground floor. A production schedule came from that same town meeting: in the summer and fall of 1797 the frame would be raised and the outside would be covered. January 1, 1799 was set as the date for completion. The location had been chosen several years earlier as Mr. Silas Beach's field north of his now dwelling House. Because of the scale of the project the shareholders decided that one person needed to be put in charge as the Superintendent of Building. Because of its importance that person was His Excellency Governor Chittenden. (Later, his son Giles was chosen to take over in 1797 after his father's death.) In the Town Meeting Records (Vol. I, p. 28) a chart records a floor plan of that Meeting House with the names of pew owners and the prices they paid. Governor Chittenden subscribed to buy three pews for his large family. It was finished and the record of the town meeting for March 3, 1800, tells that the people voted to adjourn this meeting to the meeting house.

The first settled minister in Williston, the Rev. Aaron Collins, referred to himself as The Declarer of the Organization. The Congregational Church in Williston was

organized on January 23, 1800. In accepting the terms of his contract he also took possession of 282 acres of Williston land, the Ministerial Right. He was supposed to do what the congregation could not do for itself and organize the church in an official way. He immediately appointed two deacons, David Bates and David Talcott. The original congregation numbered sixteen people: David Bates, David Talcott, Beriah Murray, Jabez Dart, Daniel Shaw, Edward Taylor, Eben Bradley, Lemuel Winslow, Enoch Judson, Daniel Shaw, Jr., John Taylor, Rhoda Shaw, Elizabeth Winslow, Diantha Bradley, Lovine Allen, Neony Bradley. At the second meeting with the new minister it was agreed not to let women vote in the church. The record notes of that session that the Meeting was closed by prayer. Collins's contract called for him to remain in Williston for 16 years; he left after five. His stay was ended otherwise than by death.

With such close overlap between town and church business, matters worked best in a religiously unanimous town. But there were early provisions in Vermont law for religious differences, perhaps under the influence of deists in positions of leadership, or so Nathan Perkins might have speculated. As early as 1783, Vermont law included "An Act to enable Towns and Parishes to erect proper Houses for Public Worship, and support Ministers of the Gospel," which provided money to support preaching by making assessments on property and on the polls. But that same law allowed for people with religious views unlike those of the majority to be exempt from such an assessment, provided that they brought a written certificate from a church officer or minister to verify their religious denomination. The town clerk was to record these exemptions. That record, which Williston's clerk faithfully kept, constitutes proof of religious diversity from the town's earliest days.

In the first volume of Town Meeting Records there are six cases of residents proving themselves exempt: three members of the Methodist Episcopalian church in Williston,

two from the Universalian Society of Charlotte, Hinesburgh and Monkton and one Baptist. The numbers in other parts of Vermont must have been more significant since in 1801 the legislature changed the law so that an economic motive encouraged conformity in religion. Under the new law, the only way to avoid paying the tax to support preaching and worship was to sign this statement: "I do not agree in religious opinion with a majority of the inhabitants of this town." What the legislature had not foreseen was the unusual growth that this law fostered in the number of dissenters and in the establishment of churches.

Just a few years later, the legislature again changed the law to allow people to make voluntary contributions to pay ministers or to build meeting houses. None of these fine adjustments of the law helped Williston's sense of being united in faith. The town actually became legalistic for a period, as if imitating the state's reliance on the letter of the law to solve spiritual and social difficulties. It voted to have two distinct bodies, the one defined by belief and the other by its relation to the meeting house. On paper the distinction made perfect sense, so plain and clear. In real life having two societies meant that Williston headed for an impasse on the question of which group owned the meeting house and had the responsibility of making any repairs that it needed. Twenty years went by before that delicate question could be worked out.

That obvious stalemate forced Williston to take a step backward. During the years from 1807 to 1818 no regular or settled minister served the community. In other words, the town went back to counting on visits from Connecticut missionaries to tend to all spiritual needs. During those years, Vermont also suffered for political reasons that had less to do with Connecticut than with President Jefferson's trade embargo that blocked their commerce with the English in Canada. Many Vermonters felt themselves backed into a corner that

did not always make it easy to obey the law. One visiting missionary, Chauncey Lee, used Williston as his base for serving a wide area. He noted the moral price of economic hardship and sounded like others must have in despair:

> O when will mankind awake to the conviction that they have immortal souls to be saved and feel half as much engaged to secure their salvation as they now are to smuggle their pork and potashes into Canada.

The absence of continued and regular church leadership during this decade had its cost in Williston. By 1813 the record notes that certain heresies had crept in, without giving their names or describing their errors. Five years later the town righted itself and started having settled ministers again for a spell of fifteen years. By the time things returned to normal some Williston residents sensed a need to recover the spiritual ground they had lost during their years of wandering without a minister. This sentiment erupted as an extreme of zeal that inspired the church community to use discipline to chastise some offending members.

The congregation followed formal steps, again sounding vaguely legalistic, for notifying then confronting the wrongdoer and finally asking the church to make a ruling, usually on whether to let the sinner remain in the church. The transgressions that could lead to discipline remind us abruptly of how different their age was from ours. Traveling on Sunday caused public embarrassment to members who were confronted by the tithingmen for their disrespect for a scriptural command. More serious and less easily forgiven was the matter of drinking ardent spirits. And in the same spirit of watching closely over the community, the active members of the church also regulated their own procedures and protocol. By 1827 they recorded another decision made on good authority:

> [It was] voted unanimously that it is the sense of this church that it is not according to gospel order for females to speak in promiscuous assemblys for religious worship.

In the vocabulary and usage of the times, promiscuous groups were simply mixed—men and women. In such gatherings women were formally invited to remain silent. This view seems to have found few dissenters in the same church that had already established that women not be allowed to vote. The minister under whose guidance the community made the ruling about speaking, Mr. Josiah Goodhue, stayed in Williston ten years, longer than any other Congregational minister. Besides the success of adding more than one hundred names to his list of church members, he also managed to calm the rash of discipline cases that had flared up.

No doubt Mr. Goodhue worked hard for the church, but in his years in Williston, influences from nearby and from far away caused the church to feel threatened and created a vibrant interest in religion in general. From places close to Williston, new styles of religion came to town and gradually took root. One of the surprises in studying the religious or even the educational history of Williston is the importance of Hinesburg as a source of influence—and sometimes of people.

The Baptist organization, seen by some as political as much as social, did not follow the missionary model of the Congregationalists. Their system of supervising growth relied on the fact that people talk to each other and people make short trips, even in rural places. Baptists churches worked to attract members from neighboring towns. When those towns had enough interested members, they were allowed to organize a new church. The nearest Baptist church to Williston was in Hinesburg whose pastor, the Reverend Peter Chase, later moved to Williston to organize a church there. The Baptist church in Burlington, following this model, depended at first on Williston.

According to some sources, the Baptists did not have a big influence in Williston because the church lasted for only about twenty years. But anyone making that claim forgets that the Rev. Chase set up Williston Academy, whose classes he first held in the Baptist meeting house. The minor point sometimes appears that Chase owned the land where he later built a newer academy building. That is, the Baptist church did not ever own the land nor the academy, a detail that changes very little the fact of his great influence. Actually, Peter Chase came to Williston and bought nine different pieces of land and was a good enough manager to sell some of them at profit. That background helps to explain why he held onto the title for the site of the Williston Academy. As for the longevity of the Baptist church, no date marks its formal recorded demise. But once again town records help out with church history because in 1843 a letter appeared registering only one Williston resident as belonging to that church.

In fairness, the Baptist church has to be regarded as an important catalyst in the moral consciousness of Williston because of its importance in encouraging churches to discuss the question of slavery, a debate which had important results in Williston. In many parts of the United States, being a Baptist meant being an abolitionist, so closely were those two movements identified.

Another religious trend came from Hinesburg during the same lively period of questioning and discussion of urgent questions. (The town's name was originally spelled Hinesburgh; later the final h was dropped.) The Methodists used yet a third system for organizing their new churches, neither the missionary system of Congregationalists nor the breaking off of shoots from another church which was followed by the Baptists. For ordering their church, the Methodists relied on large divisions of territory called circuits under the direction of a minister who visited as often as he could and brought with him, when possible, a younger preacher. The aim of this system was to organize after a few

meetings a group of interested people into a class as they were known. The minister who started this work in Williston came from Hinesburg, as had Williston's Baptist minister. The Hinesburg Methodist church was organized as a church in 1835 and took Williston as part of its responsibility. Because classes typically met long before they had a local church, Methodists gathered in non-ecclesiastical buildings, often in schools. Although the first Methodist meeting in Williston has not been recorded as such, oral history preserves the memory of meetings in the Muddy Brook district school and also in the town hall for as long as they were welcome, which did not last long into the 1840s.

At the same time that the Methodists were attracting more believers to their church, another denomination from out of town was also increasing its strength in Williston. According to early town records of people not required to pay the tax for preaching, back in 1800 Williston had two residents who claimed association with the Universalian Society of Charlotte, Hinesburg and Monkton. It appears that Williston residents who wanted to worship in that style had to leave Williston to do so. But a generation later there must have been far more than two Universalians in Williston because they had to be counted as deserving to use the White Church, or Old Meeting House, shortly before the Brick Church was built. There must have been a period after the Congregationalists had their new brick church when the Universalians stayed on in the old building which was not torn down right away. The Universalians then built their own church and met there on Sundays. Their small numbers made other churches nervous because so many of their members were from the prosperous end of the Williston social scale. And they characterized themselves as being more tolerant than other believers. When they eventually organized themselves formally in 1844 they referred to themselves as The Friends of Liberal Principles.

The Old Brick Church, built by the Congregationals, now serves as Williston's community hall. Photo by Fred Stetson

Meanwhile the Congregationalists had changed the look of Williston at a time when they and all Williston churches felt a new and powerful presence. Religion, like other aspects of life in Williston, became more complicated by 1830. The Erie Canal had suddenly opened new territory, and Americans were able to move away, to leave home. In parts of New England where generations of farming had depleted the richness of the soil, noticeable losses of young people changed the development of communities. Unlike such places, Williston with its rich soil held its young farmers. In fact census figures show quite the opposite trend from 1820 to 1830 when the prosperous town grew in population by nearly 30 percent. Not so much the identity of the town residents as their thinking gradually changed, a shift that took longer to notice. New ideas came into Williston that people would learn to associate with religion and influences from beyond Vermont. At first, the changes were small and local. The Congregationalists, for so long the unchallenged majority church, began to notice more religious variety in Williston. They had been using the Public Meeting House that did not belong to them any more than it did to any other group. But by 1831 the town meeting had on its agenda to sort out

> what part of said [Public] Meeting House belongs to each denomination, and to give each denomination a privilege to occupy said House for social & religious worship a part of the time according to their shares and rights, that each denomination has said to house. (Town Meeting Records, Vol. I, p. 155)

The answer that came back gave the Universalians one Sunday a month, and the rest of the Sundays were to be divided among the different denominations as shall best suit and accommodate them according to their several claims. That enigmatic proclamation might mean that without the force of

an official recommendation, the Universalists, the only group mentioned by name, would have had a hard time.

At the same town meeting, another discussion reopened an old wound. The Meeting House needed work, and neither the town nor the Congregational Church undertook any repairs until the question of ownership could be settled. After twenty years of uncertainty, a committee reported that the town is the only organized body that can legally vote on the subject. Having to share a meeting house of which it was not recognized as owner, the Congregational Church, which referred to itself as the First Religious Society in its records, decided the time had come to build its own church.

If seriousness of purpose can be judged by efficiency of actions, then the Congregationalists were very serious. In November, 1831 a group of people met and formed The Society for Building a Meeting House. Other people in town referred to them as the stockholders or proprietors. Fifty-three names appeared on the articles of association. The plan was to raise funds by selling shares for ten dollars each and to choose a building committee. Later the cost of building the church would be recovered by auctioning off pews, apparently following the practice that had built the old meeting house.

After considering the expense of repairing the old meeting house, the town voted against the idea. Instead, there would be a new meeting house where the old one had stood, or so it was proposed. But a gift soon changed things. Harry Miller gave the town land suitable for a meeting house, land which happened to be across from the Brick Church.

But a national event, a spiritual phenomenon soon touched Williston that dwarfed the problems of moving a church or building a new town hall. The Second Great Awakening, a widespread and greatly significant revival of American religion touched and then shook churches all over the United States. The movement came from inside Congregational churches as they began to stand up more and more firmly against deists and also Methodists. Taking a hard

The handsome Gothic Revival details of the doorway into the Old Brick Church, built in 1832, evoke hands pointing upward in prayer, the lacy glass panes lightening the effect of heavy brickwork.

look at doctrines inherited from Calvinism, a new wave of thinkers within the Congregational church questioned one of the underlying beliefs that had shaped the thinking of what served as the established church in New England and other parts of the country. That was predestination, the idea that the ultimate fate of every soul, that is, heaven or hell, is already fixed at the time of birth, that people are saved or damned according to God's plan. By this thinking, human nature is tainted and corrupt in and of itself, so that even children cannot be viewed as morally pure. (This belief must have been profoundly disturbing to parents in an age when infant mortality was high.) Then a new generation of preachers introduced new theological concepts that rocked those inherited assumptions.

The new thinking came from such respected schools of theology as Yale University where President Timothy Dwight, who saw himself as a traditional thinker, started preaching that God's mercy would likely save sinners. That new principle encouraged people to feel less helpless than when they had been taught the depravity of mankind under Calvinistic teaching. Dwight's ideas became important to Vermonters because of his presence at Middlebury College. The force and vitality of the new movement was helped to grow by big changes that made so many Americans ready for something new. For one thing, the Erie Canal continued to act like a magnet pulling people away from New England. Many emigrated to upper New York state where uprooted young men suddenly found themselves living away from home for the first time and trying to adapt quickly to a raft of radical changes. In that receptive environment, the Great Awakening leapt into action thanks to the talent and effort of Charles Grandison Finney, a speaker who revolutionized American preaching, if not religion.

Finney, famous in Utica and Rochester before Williston knew his influence, told people something they had never

heard before— that they could take their spiritual destiny into their own hands, that they could save themselves. His urgent style conveyed a sense that time was short and salvation available to everyone. Finney had started down a career path to being a lawyer before he changed to the ministry. With that decision Finney made more of a difference to the Congregational church than anyone before him. In 1831 alone, membership rose by 100,000. And one of his converts and followers, Jedidiah Burchard, preached in Williston in 1835 in the present Old Brick Church, when it was new.

Trained by Finney, Burchard understood that the enthusiasm of his converts would be matched by the displeasure of his opponents, especially the theological ones. Because Williston was close enough to two institutions with an interest in theology, Middlebury College and the University of Vermont, high powered theological specialists attended or sent representatives to Williston to act as informants about what went on. Finney understood audience participation so well that he drew part of his listeners into his presentation by having places near the front, near him, reserved for people who felt themselves close to the point of salvation, who might experience a powerful moment of change. This area he called the anxious bench. With great flair and drama he told of his own conversion experience to give listeners an idea of how forcefully their own emotions might soon overwhelm them. Burchard imitated this highly effective method of theatrical inspiration.

Burchard, like Finney, had changed careers, but Burchard had not started out in the study of the law, as had his master. He had been with the circus. That background served him well when he wanted to quicken the interest of listeners. And since his protracted meetings sometimes lasted for weeks, he could not conduct every meeting in the same way. To avoid ritualistic sameness, Burchard did things that no one—at least no one in Williston—had ever seen. As he preached, he walked across the tops of the backs of pews, a

talent that he probably developed in his circus days. When he felt it necessary Burchard also dazzled his spiritually motivated audience with gymnastic stunts, not exactly what usually passed for a sermon.

Before he came to Williston, Burchard had preached in Burlington. Possibly he spoke to the larger audience first in the hope that converts from that assembly would follow him to the next town and swell the size of the congregation. Whether he planned it that way or not, when he spoke in Williston Burchard had the benefit of followers—literally—from Burlington where he had made a considerable 200 converts. Today, the idea of such performances may sound amusing, but at the time serious people saw Burchard as a serious threat. The faculty of Middlebury College, for example, joined with the University of Vermont's faculty, university President John Wheeler and former President John Marsh into speaking out against Burchard. Religious leaders including Burlington's Episcopal Bishop John Henry Hopkins, grandfather of Dorothy Canfield Fisher, came out strongly against Burchard. But not everyone shared the Bishop's views. Some ministers in Williston and many residents of Burlington considered Burchard's message to be the truth and spirit of God. Some ministers of Middlebury also supported Burchard, maybe following the example of Joshua Bates, president of Middlebury College. Bates, by the way, was in the audience in Williston at least once.

Those differences of theology should not be looked at as academic debates or questions about dancing angels; many thought that the continued existence of the University of Vermont was at risk. One Vermont publisher, Chauncey Goodrich, related by marriage to Professor James Marsh, wanted to know everything about Burchard's Williston meeting but apparently did not want to be seen there. He hired two University of Vermont undergraduates to go to the Old Brick Church and take notes. They were Charles G. Eastman and his friend, B.J. Tenney, whom Burchard tried to convert.

The technique that worked on 200 people in Burlington did not get through to young Tenney. But Burchard wanted success in that case so much that he offered the young man money, the considerable sum of more than $150. Apparently, Burchard wanted to lay claim to more than Tenney's soul. He hoped the money would help persuade the young man to hand over the notes he was taking. For the rest of his life, Tenney must have loved telling the story of what he did: he took the money and kept the notes. His friend Eastman did not have such an easy time. To get him to stop taking notes, Burchard tried having his deacons use physical force. Then Burchard invited one of his most impressive partisans, President Joshua Bates of Middlebury College, to go to the pulpit and speak out against the disruptive young men. In the end, Burchard did the most powerful thing he could imagine and refused to speak. He used that confrontation to enrage his follower who did not quickly forget the session that deepened their contempt for the villains in their eyes, the University of Vermont faculty.

The episode shows how faithfully the experience of Williston reflected the change and ferment in much of the United States during the Second Great Awakening. The intensity of that movement in the 1830s could not remain at the same level. But it did change how people thought about moral questions that, without the Great Awakening, might have seemed strictly political. When Finney preached that individuals were responsible for their own salvation he did not excuse them from thinking of the welfare of others. In fact, he reminded converts and listeners that the Biblical rule to ìlove thy neighbor as thyselfî amounted to a prohibition of slavery. Even Americans who had no time for revivals or theological questions knew that they had to have an opinion about slavery. And in Williston opinions proved to be strong and public.

In Williston, opinions proved to be strong and public. The Williston Congregational Church either felt that it had to

take a stand on slavery, or felt that it could not defend being silent on the question. In the record are resolutions passed as early as 1841 condemning slavery and saying, in effect, that no man-made law can make it right because it is a moral evil. Just a few years later and under the leadership of a different minister new and more forceful resolutions were passed that not only criticized the faraway evil of slavery, but connected the question to the Williston Congregational Church:

> Resolved, 3. That we will not receive to our communion tables and to our pulpits, ministers and members of churches who are living in or justify slavery.

Unlikely as that situation sounded, that anyone in Williston would live in slavery, the idea of justifying it did hit home. It had to do with politics. And Williston must have been reeling at the identity of the culprits. In December, 1844, Anson Byington, of the Congregationalist community, made a formal complaint against two prominent members of his church based on his interpretation of that resolution:

> Complaint that Brothers Truman Chittenden and Harry Miller had in Voting for J.K. Polk and Henry Clay in the Last Presidential Election participated in the Sin of Slaveholding in a manner not only inconsistent with all antislavery professions, antislavery prayers and prayers for righteous rulers, but also with the divine Law thou shall Love thy neighbor as thyself.

Truman Chittenden said he had not voted as Byington claimed. The church dismissed Byington's charge against both men.

Charles Grandison Finney changed many of the New York towns where he preached by changing not only the

beliefs but the behavior of young men. After Finney finished in a community, people did not drink the way they had before. Much of the region he worked over became known as the burnt-out district because of the fire of his sermons. They happened to be developing industrial districts where the employers of the changed young men welcomed their new sobriety. "Saved souls" made for better workers. Finney's powerful appeal to women, whom he allowed to speak and even to preach, won him important helpers. Because wives recognized their interest in having husbands bring their wages home rather than to a beer hall or tavern, they poured fervor and energy into Finney's campaigns. The economy of Williston did not have huge industrial employers, but the arguments for temperance found receptive listeners. The Williston Congregationalists who heard Burchard did not ignore that part of what he preached. Following Maine's lead in 1850, Vermont would become in 1851 the second state in the Union to adopt prohibition. (When Vermont repealed the ban on alcohol it was the last state to do so. By then the year was 1919 and federal prohibition took over.)

The waves of shock that the Second Great Awakening created in American churches spread so far that they created some aftershocks that took the form of other religious irregularities. One of these had to do with creating a radical sect called the Millerites that at its height claimed some 50,000 adherents. It carried special force in Williston because of an alleged family connection.

When the famous William Miller for whom the sect was named came to Williston to preach, he told people that he was related to the local Miller family, important in the community from earliest days. But the Williston Millers said they had never heard of him. The out-of-town Miller came from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. His connection to Vermont came from his marriage in Poultney. He made his home in Low Hampton, New York. William Miller made his living as a farmer but spent a great deal of time reading books. It turned out to be sad, if not tragic, that his studious efforts isolated

him from other farmers and allowed him few opportunities to discuss what he read. His program of self-education did not include books that taught him critical or analytical thinking, so he formed pessimistic ideas on his own. When Miller did meet people able to talk about ideas with him, they were deists. Contact with their principles of reason left Miller with the sneering doubt of a cynic.

Something of his childhood faith and Baptist upbringing stayed with Miller, and while he was sitting in the Baptist church in Low Hampton he experienced a revelation, as often happened to people in those days, according to the devotional literature of the time. Miller found himself inspired to concentrate the effort of his study on Sacred Scripture. He began a rigorous program of intensive reading and investigation that lasted for fourteen years. In that time he made it his business to master two books of the Bible, one from the Old Testament, the book of the prophet Daniel, and one from the New, The Apocalypse. The result of his effort was a prediction resulting from extensive mathematical calculations. William Miller knew that Christ was about to come again, and he knew when. It is touching to see the confidence he placed in his study and to see his social conscience. Because he had this information Miller felt that he had to let everyone know.

In fairness it should be pointed out that in the first half of the nineteenth century ideas of this kind were in the air. In England a titled aristocrat, Lady Hester Stanhope was preaching that time was growing short. In the United States, Harriet Livermore, whose father represented Massachusetts in the Congress of the United States, proclaimed the same kind of message in many places, even in the House of Representatives because of her family connection. William Miller, who made himself the most successful of the Millenialists in this country, had neither social prestige nor political connections. But he did have a kind of luck.

Nature seemed to be on Miller's side. When people saw extraordinary events in the natural world they thought that maybe Miller had the explanation. Timothy Meigs Bradley,

sometimes Justice of the Peace in Williston, kept a diary around the time that Miller was making his name known. Bradley had more time than some Williston residents to think about such things because he was a semi-invalid who spent time reading religious matter such as printed sermons and devout periodicals. Bradley's diary notes that just weeks before Miller's appointed date for the Second Coming there was an earthquake that he describes in his own way:

> Wednesday, March 15, 1843. . . There was an Earthquake. . . . At first I thought it was thunder but the sound continued more uniform than thunder. I perceived no jar as is common in very heavy thunder. The noise seemed to me like the passing of a large number of waggons very swiftly over a smooth road without stones.

In his diary Bradley never said that he believed Miller or that he disbelieved him. He said merely of the great prediction, It is a solemn thought. According to Miller, when Christ came it would be to gather up the righteous and to leave the rest with the earth to be burned up. The day of the great event was to be Monday, April 3, 1843. On April 4, most people in Williston and Essex wanted to talk about what had not happened. Bradley records that the new date given out was the 12th of April, or so he heard. By May Bradley's recreational reading concentrated on politics.

Those who still believed in Miller—and he was losing followers by the thousands—prepared for still another time, in a different year and different season. In Vermont it mattered more than in some places that the new date, October 22, 1844, required a supposedly brief sacrifice of comfort. According to instructions the believers who assembled on a hilltop in Williston were to be dressed only in white robes, a simple garment for the occasion, probably not as warm as what they needed by late October. They were also supposed to

dispose of their property. The people who returned to town after they waited in vain for their particular version of salvation must have been something of a problem for the community to solve. Some families with no property would have needed help. From what is known about Williston churches at the time it is likely that the Universalists would have had the easiest time assimilating these disappointed souls. In some communities Millerites continued to perceive themselves as a group that later evolved into the Adventist Church. But in Williston in the nineteenth century the movement never took root. (There is, however, a Seventh Day Adventist Church on the St. George Road.)

The years preceding the Civil War brought to Williston the same tension that was gripping every part of America. Groups that used to coexist peacefully had trouble practicing tolerance. In Williston, the Universalians thought they were winning acceptance until the town voted in 1841 not to allow them to use the town hall for their meetings under any circumstances. Views on slavery seem to explain some of the hard feelings. Earlier, Williston had organized a chapter of the American Colonization Society, a group that favored sending black Americans back to Africa, where they had established the colony of Liberia. In 1855 brotherly love ebbed in Williston. For reasons that no one wrote down, every time there was a town meeting—and there were three that year—questions were discussed but not easily resolved. Maybe by coincidence 1856 was the year with the biggest drop in membership of the Congregational Church.

The members no longer attending the Old Brick Church did not necessarily leave as a group, but at about that time the Universalist community was growing vigorously enough to be able to build a church. The building dedicated in January, 1860 had cost $4,666.19. In two years all but a small portion of that sum was repaid. Not many details are recorded about how the project was managed, but one small fact underlines a difference in style that touches upon a profound difference

from other churches. Time came for the dedicating of the new church building and the assigning of seats. There was no mention of an auction of pews as had been done in other Williston churches. One plan proposed that people draw lots to settle where they should sit, but that was not followed. Instead, the Universalists agreed that people should sit where they liked. No auction. No owned pews. That church originally had a pointed steeple, not the bulbous one it has today as the building serves as Town Hall.

When the Civil War began, Williston showed that its sentiments on slavery ran deeper than the words of the community's resolutions. Young men joined the Union Army (see Chapter Five) and the Reverend Joseph Sargent, hired as Universalist minister—not settled or installed as in other churches—signed up, too. As he watched men younger than himself putting down their names he decided that he could not ask them to go if he stayed home. Rev. Sargent, who had left New Hampshire to come to Williston for the sake of his children's education, became chaplain of the Thirteenth Regiment of the Vermont Volunteer Militia. After he signed up, Rev. Sargent never saw Vermont again. Not combat but contagion caused his death from typhoid fever. He died in Virginia in 1863 at the age of forty-six.

Religious scruples troubled women, at least some women, in Williston more than the men when it came to helping out with the war effort, or so it seemed. A few female members of the Congregational Church required considerable moral suasion before they could be brought round to help other women sew bandages to send to Union soldiers. But ladies gathered on Sunday, the one day left free from farm work, to do this important work of mercy. Brought up with a strong and rigid belief in refraining from work on the Sabbath, a few very devout women had to wrestle with the conflict between observing the letter of the law and answering the call to patriotic duty. In the end, all the ladies cooperated to help the Union army, after making their delicacy of conscience well known.

The Reverend Joseph Sargent, Williston's Universalist minister, volunteered as chaplain of the Thirteen Vermont Regiment and died of typhus in Virginia.

After the Civil War many towns in the United States experienced prosperity that they had not known. Williston,

which had known prosperity before the war, now recovered from the economic cost of high taxes that the town had paid for the support of the war. For nearly a century it had been true that when Williston prospered some group would organize itself and give the town a new public building. More often than not these had been churches, even when most of the schools in the town were small and poorly equipped. Now in the years when Williston was getting back on its feet the Methodists decided that after little more than twenty years, they had outgrown their church and needed a larger one. In 1869 there were 92 regular Congregational worshippers at the Old Brick Church. A generation before the war it would have been unthinkable that the Methodists would ever constitute more than a marginal gathering. But they had 59 members when they built their new church in 1869. The Methodists also saw a huge spiritual success in the 1868 revival that attracted a record number of new members on probation. That church, unlike earlier Williston monuments, was not financed by the support of stockholders or proprietors. The cost of buying the land, building and furnishing the church came to $18,116. Of that sum $12,000 came from three individuals: Priscilla Clark, the widow of Wright Clark; her son Jason Clark; and L. A. Bishop, her son-in-law.

The terrible national trauma of the Civil War diminished many kinds of confidence in America. One widespread movement proved how profoundly people questioned all their beliefs, particularly religious ones. The vogue of Spiritualism in Williston resembled what many other towns were experiencing during the years after the war. People met in small, closed groups in private homes to hold a session in which some member of the assembly entered into contact with the other world, the domain of the dead. Among the churches in town only the Universalists, because they were most tolerant, ever allowed Spiritualists to meet in their church. Those gatherings allowed anyone to attend, including children whose parents never knew.

One of these was Mrs. Brownell Morrill, who attended a meeting on the sly and received a message from her brother who had died not long before. In some cases the spirit communicated messages which, either then or soon after the meeting, were written down in notebooks passed down in some few Williston families. Sometimes the messages followed the form of letters starting with a formal greeting such as ìMy dear brother.î Others took or nearly took the form of poetry. A consistent theme was that people who opposed spiritualism while alive would have a less peaceful afterlife than those who had favored it.

Other Williston churches knew about what the Spiritualists did when they got together and what they believed, but the churches worried more about the list of things that Spiritualists did not believe. In Williston, a religious community that knew its Bible well, as did nineteenth-century Christians in many countries and cultures, the Spiritualists set themselves apart, far apart, by not believing in the Bible because, they said, it was inauthentic. Without any written proof supernatural truths divinely revealed to man, they lacked any reason to believe in the divinity of Christ. And on and on. Separated from the rest of Williston by great chasms of disbelief, not only were Spiritualists not integrated into other religious communities, they were excommunicated. These earthly slights followed departed souls who sent word back to Spiritualist listeners.

Mr. Sheldon Douglas suffered the public scandal of excommunication from the Congregational Church. At one Spiritualist meeting that Douglas later attended a message came to him from his deceased wife. During her lifetime she had not joined her husband in his beliefs, but in the message that she directed to him, and that was written down, the late (but communicating) Mrs. Douglas regrets her hard-headed refusal. Now, in the spirit world, she knows that because of that poor judgment in her lifetime she must suffer the pain of not being able to communicate with her living children. If

only she had accepted her husband's beliefs.

Oddly, even after they departed earthly life, the spirits whose messages reached Spiritualist gatherings sounded at times decidedly political, sent by famous and presumably influential people. The first entry in the Williston notebook is signed by Thomas Paine whose pamphlets at the time of the Revolution had influenced American relations with Great Britain. He attempts to explain why messages from souls like his can reach gatherings of Spiritualists. Partly it has to do with sitting in a circle and the resulting magnetism between bodies. During Paine's lifetime ideas about animal magnetism found many estimable followers. Another recorded message came from Abraham Lincoln on August 31, 1866. In it the martyred president gives advice:

> Andrew Johnson is a darker villain a more consummate traitor than Jeff Advise, and will lay deeper plans to betray his country than Advise has done, but the God of the free reigns. In electing Baxter [a name supposedly known to the people in the room], you will defeat some leading office seekers and selfish politicians who would betray their country.

Since time means nothing to souls liberated from earthly bonds, one message is signed, with a recognizable flourish, as coming from John Hancock. Another message came from a soul closer to the days of those assembled. Williston Spiritualists must have been comforted to hear from the spirit of Joseph Sargent, the minister hired by the Universalists who served the Thirteenth Regiment as its chaplain. His message shows an understanding of how religious differences worked in Williston:

> Friends, Friends. I have come to tell you that I was expecting to go to a Universalist heaven when I died but I found it a spiritualist heaven. You

> know I preached for my bread and butter as all unfortunate ministers of the Gospel do and I could not make spiritualism a theme. . . . I shall preach a funeral sermon soon in Williston. I am not permitted to give the particulars, but you will know me when I come.

Sargent showed a good understanding of the importance of religious gatherings, including funerals, for the social life of Williston. Other messages made trouble by offering revelations about people in town known to everyone. The few people who heard the communications no doubt believed what they said, but the people being discussed may never have known what was said. And there was the problem of a charge from an accuser one could not face. Williston's first superintendent of schools, the Reverend Barber, attracted the speculation of spirits. Barber's first wife had been dead for many years when her message was received in Williston (she died in Montpelier). His second wife was the sister of Elisha Miller, a Spiritualist from an important Williston family. Rev. Barber, by the way, opposed Spiritualism. It was also known in Williston that Barber's poor health had caused him to retire from work as a preacher. The message recorded from the first Mrs. Barber explains the link between bodily ills and an anti-spiritualist, disposition. The problem, she explained, came from the anxiety of his departed friends who tried to but could not communicate with him. The message carried a suggestion that by a change of attitude toward Spiritualists Barber could improve his health.

The bitterness of the general dislike for Spiritualists must not have been good for Williston. It was the only religious innovation that ever came to Williston from Burlington in those days. Even though the belief directly concerned only a few families, the climate of hard feeling that it created began to taint the way that Williston churches in general regarded other denominations. The town could not easily

ignore the excommunication of Elisha Miller and his wife from the Congregational church. But because the Spiritualists did not cultivate a new generation of believers, their numbers dwindled and the group ceased to exist. The influence of Spiritualists did not produce a new church in Williston, but their presence left an echo of discord. Other Williston churches for a while had less tolerance among themselves in the wake of the Spiritualists and the turbulence they churned.

Apparently because the Universalists had the double reputation of being particularly prosperous and especially tolerant, envy from other religious groups targeted them. Long after 1847 when the Congregationalists disinvited the Universalists from using their Meeting House, a trace of hard feeling toward Universalists remained. No recorded or official reason explains the Methodist position, but a public statement made long afterwards, in 1912, speaks for itself. Not anyone local, but a Methodist District Superintendent spoke that year at a conference in Williston. His observation, that he tried to make sound theological, concerned the Universalist idea that salvation was universal, or available to everyone. The cleric objected to that belief because if "some people" he knew were going to be allowed in heaven, then he would rather not go.

Anyone in Williston who remembered the difficulties that existed among denominations saw evidence of a constructive spirit of cooperation when in 1899 the Congregational Church joined the Methodist Church to become the Federated Church, now thought of as the one with the steeple. But anyone with a long memory would have been at least a little surprise that the merger followed a thinning out of numbers in the Congregational Church, once the mainstay of Christianity in Williston. That federation did not hold itself up as the wave of the future to inspire Williston to have fewer churches. But the following year the Universalists stopped having services in their Church, now the Williston Town Hall.

Federated Church clock is usually visible from as far away as Interstate 89. Photo by Fred Stetson.

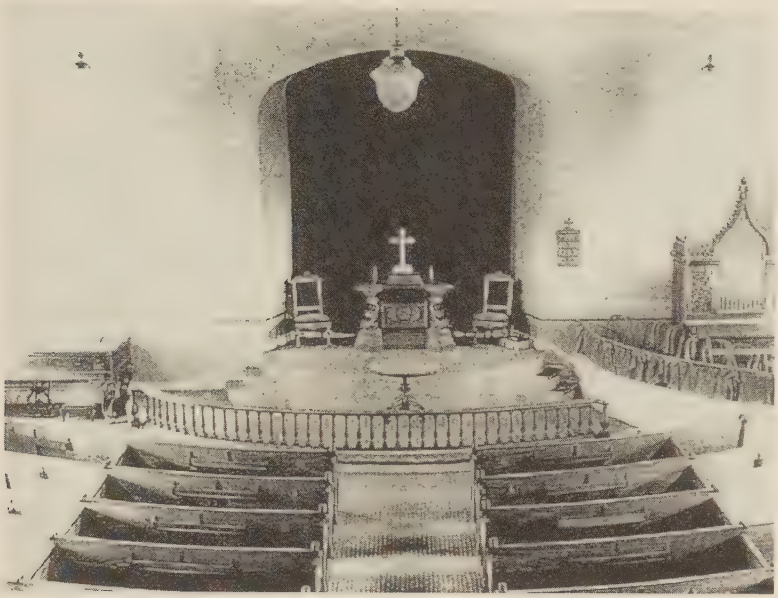
The elaborate late Victorian steeple of Federated Church was temporarily grounded for renovations after nearly a century of service. Photo by Fred Stetson.

A generation later, when the federation celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, David Isham Talcott, who was about eighty years old at the time, wrote a poem that both celebrated and preserved the history of his church, the Williston Universalist Church. The two rhyming words that Talcott highlights, "church" and "lurch," convey his feeling about where he has been left. The church he supported for most of his life and most of its existence had been remodelled into a social hall:

When I was a boy quite small
We used to worship in the Old Town Hall
The hall was dingy the seats were hard
Two sermons a day were on the card
And I tell you those sermons were good and long
The parson was faithful and his lungs were strong.
Our fathers and grandfathers were sturdy men
So the thought came to them
That they would no longer be left in the lurch
That they would take hold and build a church
And on it they would put a good tall steeple
That should proclaim to all the people
That their hopes of heaven and eternal rest
Rose just as high as the very best
So they built the church across the street
From where the Congo's used to meet
Each church had a bell and Sunday morning
They echoed forth their timely warning
Come here and learn how to keep out of Hell
Clanged forth the sturdy Congo bell
The other answered in accents sweet
We all in heaven will happily meet
The old people died the young moved away
The boys no longer on the farms would stay
Or if they did they didn't care for preaching
And had no hunger for Sunday school teaching

They would rather ride in the swift limousine
Or play a game of ball on the village green
So two churches were closed and for religious teaching
People had to depend on Methodist preaching
Solemn and grim the old churches stood
Useless structures of brick and wood
And I used to wish with all my might
That the very last brick could be thrown out of sight
A miracle happened that rejoiced us all
Our church was made into a pleasant hall
There people could meet by night or day
For charity sweet or dancing gay
Lectures and music and social dinners
A goodly place for saints or sinners
So now it is well understood
That our church is doing lots of good
And if fickle fortune had not left me in the lurch
I would surely put a tablet on the dear old church.

Because David Talcott was born around 1849, he would have remembered or heard of things that other people in Williston in 1929 would not know. When he referred to the Congo church, for example, people probably took it as a light-hearted or even irreverent way of referring to the Congregational Church. But there was more to it than that. In the 1860s and even earlier there were meetings at the Congregational Church for collective or concerted prayer intended to help the cause of missions in Africa and other places. (These gatherings called the monthly concert sound like musical events.) And for one year the pastor of that church had been the Rev. Charles Livingstone, brother of David Livingstone, the famous nineteenth-century British missionary and explorer in Africa. Talcott reminds Williston that the old days of hard feelings of other churches for the Universalists have been forgotten now that the church is a public hall.



Interior of the Federated Church in 1913; the organ now plays in the Congregational meetinghouse at Shelburne Museum. It was handmade by Williston cabinetmaker Russell Munson.

Very elderly members of the Williston community might remember that one of the most repeated stories about the Universalist church had to do with its organ, designed and built by Russell Munson, a local Williston inventor considered a genius by some. He taught himself to play the organ, according to members of his family, and figured out how to design and build one. After an episode that now cannot be entirely reconstructed, the organ was removed from the church.

Williston's landmark village churches had all been established by the end of the nineteenth century, but the religious life of the town continued to evolve. As Williston stopped being a farming community, people came to live in Williston from all over Chittenden County, or even farther away. The arrival of more French Canadian families in the Twentieth

Century brought more Catholics. Beginning in 1950 there was a Catholic presence in Williston but it was not integrated into the community.

The land where the Catholic Church now stands, west of the village on Route 2, already belonged to several families well-known in the history of Williston when the diocese of Burlington purchased it in 1950. Harry Miller owned it in 1834, when he sold 210 acres without buildings to Otis and Edmund Whitney in 1845. They sold 19 acres to Alice Johnson and her sisters, Bolina and Maude McEwen. By that time there were buildings. Belle Augusta Johnson, daughter of Alice Johnson, bought from Frank Clark 7.53 adjacent acres in 1906; and in 1919 bought another .4 acre north of the homestead from Robert Arms. When Belle A. J. Linsmeir inherited her mother's estate in 1926, it included the 19 acres and the buildings.

Many Williston residents still remember that dances were held on the property in the 1930s. Belle A.J. Lucas lived in New Jersey and used the home as a summer house. What people referred to as the "Johnson Homestead" consisted of 26.93 acres that belonged to the Lucas famly until May 1948, when they sold it to J.R. Thibault of Burlington. A very short time later, in June 1948, Thibault sold the property to Robert and Nadine Schmid of New York. The Schmids transformed the house into an inn, known as Elmcrest. Serious problems with water quality, along with high expenses, forced the Schmids to close the inn within twelve months. They sold it back to Thibault in July 1949.

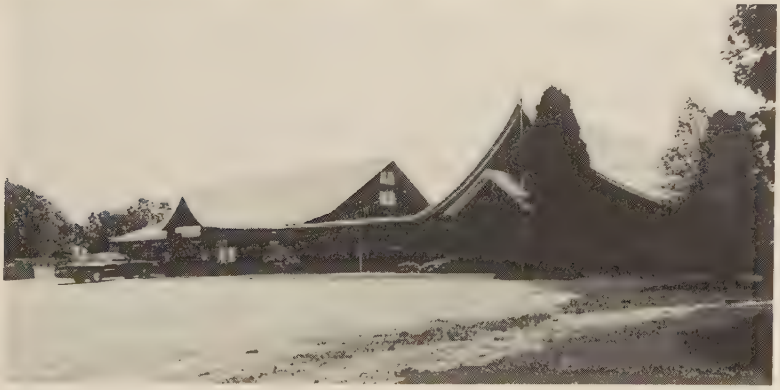
A year later in July 1950 the Diocese of Burlington, led by Bishop Edward Ryan, bought 25.6 acres from J.R. Thibault. Bishop Ryan intended to use the property to help a commuity of Carmelite nuns who had come to Vermont from New York. As the new proprietor, the Diocese of Burlington made the barn into a church. What had been the carriage house became a side chapel. As part of the remodelling, the barn's crossbeams were removed to make possible

the creation of a vaulted ceiling. In place of crossbeams scissor trusses were installed, but lacked the strength to hold the walls together. The roof of the converted barn stayed in place, it was believed, because heat loss in winter helped melt the snow on it. Because that roof could not support the weight of a bell, a low structure was built beside the church to house the bell that had been on it. The house was remodelled as living quarters for the cloistered nuns. The parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was created for the Catholics of Williston, who had been attending Mass in Burligton and other neighboring towns.

In October 1951 the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Burlington purchased 25 acres from the diocese of Burlington. Their purchase included everything but the .6 acre with the church on it. Part of the land was set within an enclosure to guarantee privacy for the Carmelites, who leased the chapel and part of the sacristy. In 1951 or 1952, according to church sources, Orin Prior gave the nuns a henhouse that he had built but never used. That building was made into a dormitory. East of the church, on the nuns' property, a shrine was erected by the confraternity of Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel, of Burligton and Winooski. The bishop dedicated and blessed the shrine in 1954. The confraternity tended it until August 1964, when it was give to the parish.

By 1968 the number of nuns in the cloistered commuity had grown, making the house no longer suitable for their numbers. At that time the nuns sold the property back to the diocese and moved to Barre. The former henhouse, known fondly as "the coop," was used at various times as living quarters for the clergy, as a meeting place for Williston Senior citizens and as classrooms for religious instruction. When it could not be brought up to state building code standards without extensive upgrading, the building was torn down. After the nuns moved to Barre, the house proper stayed vacant for a time. Now it houses the pastor and provides classrooms. Its interior was redone extensively in 1981. In 1992 the

Six modern churches have been built in Williston since IBM and I-89 brought a rapidly-expanding populace in the 1960's. They are, left, top to bottom, Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church; Trinity Baptist



Church and Maranatha Church; and right, top to bottom, Christ Memorial Church; Brownell Mountain Seventh-Day Adventist Church and Church of the Nazarene.

Immaculate Heart of Mary parish built its new church, center of worship for 700 families. It is now the first church that is visible on the way into town, if not the primary landmark religious structure.

After the federation with the Methodists, the Old Brick Church, for so long the focal point of Williston's religious life, no longer served a religious purpose in the twentieth century. Williston residents who can remember back far enough still talk about the times when kids used to play baseball inside that church, it was in such bad repair. They know who they are. But those same elderly people express great pleasure that they are finally doing something with it. In 1976 at the time of the national bicentennial the restored Old Brick Church once again served the community as it had historically by inviting local churches to celebrate there in honor of the great national festival.

Certainly no one in Williston today would call the Old Brick Church unimportant. Not only has it become the fixed star of Williston landmarks, it has also inspired what has to be called Williston's civic religion. The active and estimable Williston Historical Society, responsible for the revival of interest in the town's history starting in the 1970s, has wisely centered its efforts on the Old Brick Church by having it restored, maintained and officially registered. It now sits out of harm's way protected by its hard won prestige.

Taking the time to study history sometimes pays its rewards in the small surprises that the effort reveals. The history behind the buildings that people think of as Williston's churches tells a story of a town that was not ever dominated by the few. Again and again committees, not families, worked together to build, to organize to come to agreements. The names are in the record books but the names change frequently. Collective planning and collective effort show a stronger pattern than any handful of patrons or masters. That pattern kept the town stable and kept the churches from violating the scale of things, which has always been the human scale.

CHAPTER FIVE

Answering Father Abraham's Call: The Civil War

Thirteen-year-old Frank Forbes was working in the field near the Talcott farm on Oak Hill Road one day in July, 1861, when "I saw a hayrick pass the house," he later wrote. "It had the Stars and Stripes flying from a pole and men in it were shouting and singing, "Come on, boys! Come on!"

It was a short time after the First Battle of Bull Run and "the North was realizing that the war was a big thing and was calling for men." Few Williston men had rushed off to answer President Abraham Lincoln's first call to arms after the attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, in April of 1861. In a secret telegram, Lincoln had asked Governor Erastus Fairbanks if he would support the Federal Union with a regiment of militia to defend the nation's capital and a $500,000 subsidy if the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter. Vermont quickly doubled both requests. According to the 1860 U.S. Census, there were 315,000 Vermonters. In all 34, 238 Vermonters answered Lincoln's calls for recruits before the four year Civil War was over, the highest ratio in the

Union. Of these, 127 men volunteered from the town of Williston (out of a population in 1860 of 1,479).

At first, it seems, the farmers and artisans of Williston tried to keep intact their peaceful, prosperous way of life. Most people assumed that, after a Union show of force, the crisis would blow over by the end of summer. There were young boys who hitched rides to the rallies in Burlington and went to see off the first volunteers at the camp there, but at first the volunteers from Williston were few. One of them was young Dr. Cornelius A. Chapin, a University of Vermont graduate with degrees in both medicine and the classics. He was among the first recruits to leave his family and comfortable life behind when the First Vermont Brigade entrained for Camp Lincoln, the canvas town taking shape in Brattleboro. There, he was issued his uniform and sword and learned to drill his men before they were shipped South. The rout of Union troops by the Confederates at Bull Run in northern Virginia on July 21st, 1861, finally convinced the people of the village and surrounding farms that it would take more than a few regiments of sharpshooting Yankees to defeat the determined Southerners. As news of the Union debacle flashed north across the telegraph wire and splashed across the front page of the *Burlington Free Press*, young men lined up at Town Hall in Williston to sign up.

Three days after the United States's first serious defeat in battle since the War of 1812, a second group of Williston boys headed south with the newly-minted Third Regiment of the First Vermont Brigade. Dorr A. Roleau, a drummer in the regimental band, joined up with Corporal Charles Gill.

Williston's civilians, shocked into action, turned out for a "bee" in the Bradley woods west of Oak Hill. They cut down enough tall trees to splice into a towering 150 foot flag pole—as high as an 18-story building—and "snaked" it into the village where they planted it in front of the new Town Hall at Oak Hill Road and the Williston Turnpike (today's Route 2). Many "people were afraid it would fall on someone or do

some damage," young Frank Forbes reported. But the people of Williston vowed to leave it standing as long as the war lasted.

After leaving Vermont (the usual route was by rail to Brattleboro, then by steamboat down the Connecticut River and south by sea to Chesapeake Bay and then up the Potomac River), the First Vermont Brigade was assigned the tedious but vital chore of protecting the drinking water supply of the nation's capital at a reservoir at Georgetown. The Williston enlistees helped to lay out Camp Lyon (named for Vermont Revolutionary War patriot and Congressman Matthew Lyon) while they drilled and trained.

President Lincoln himself came to review the Vermont troops, attended by his Cabinet officers as well as the commanding general, Mexican War hero Winfield "Old Fuss 'n' Feathers" Scott and the popular "Little Napoleon," George B. McClellan.

The Third Vermont Regiment was soon in the center of a storm of controversy. Only one week after arriving at camp, eighteen-year-old William Scott of Groton, one of five sons of Scottish immigrants who had enlisted shortly after the war broke out, took the place of a friend on picket duty, a duty he'd had the night before, and fell asleep half a mile from the rebel lines. The penalty for falling asleep at his sentinel post was death. A 12-man courtmartial of Vermont officers sentenced young Scott to be shot. Just six weeks off the farm like so many other Vermonters in his regiment, Scott stood before a firing squad on September 9th.

Williston's soldiers had joined other Vermonters, however, in petitioning President Lincoln to spare Private Scott. Newspapers in Vermont and throughout the Union spread the story of the exhausted farm boy who had fallen asleep supposedly after weeks of hard marching. The nation's press was divided. The Union forces had been badly beaten at Bull Run only four days before the Vermonters were given the guard duty. Williston's strippling soldiers joined the ranks of

Vermonters who were ordered to witness the exemplary execution. At the last possible moment, President Lincoln intervened. "I could not think of going into eternity with the blood of that poor young man on my skirts," Lincoln later wrote. As Scott stood before the six-Vermonter firing squad, their commanding officer read Lincoln's pardon aloud to the troops. Early in September, the Vermont troops marched across the Potomac into Virginia. They constructed canvas-roofed log houses at their new base, Fort Ethan Allen, and waited for McClellan's great Union offensive against the Confederate capital at Richmond to begin.

In the autumn of 1861, when the first regiment of Vermont cavalry was raised, Frank Forbes and his young friends, the Marshall boys, joined other Williston youth at the old fair grounds north of Burlington. The new governor, Frederick Holbrook, who was to govern Vermont through most of the Civil War, had called for two more regiments of Vermont volunteers. "I was out there looking around," Forbes later recalled. "I went out as often as I could and lived around the camp on and off for two or three weeks." He helped to care for the Morgan horses of the soldiers and

> tried to make myself useful. I wanted to go with them. I knew when the regiment was leaving for the South and I was there that day to help lead the horses along when they 'carried' them (aboard the troop train). But Father heard they were leaving and, thinking that perhaps I might run off with them, he came to the camp and said to me, 'Come on home, boy. You'll have a chance to go later.'

Like most Willistonians, like most Northerners, young Frank Forbes "did not believe him." Surely, the North would now trounce the rebels and come home quickly and he would miss his chance for glory.

William F. Whitney, nineteen-year-old graduate of Williston Academy, joined Company F of the Thirteenth.

In that first full year of war, life began to change in Williston. Lincoln announced a naval blockade to strangle the South slowly. Perfumes and fabrics and tea and other lux-

ury imports began to dry up. When the harvest season came, large-scale farmers like the Talcotts and the Brownells could no longer take a train to the docks in New York City and hire newly-arrived Irish immigrants and bring them back for a year of hard labor in the fields. From the north, a new group of farmhands arrived. French-Canadians rode the hayricks and slept in the store rooms and barns and put in long hours in the blazing sun. They did not, like the Irish, move on to the West. They came to Williston and they stayed.

But this was a subtle change at first compared to the shocking introduction of paper money. To create a large new money supply, early in 1862 President Lincoln introduced "greenbacks" to augment gold and silver coins. Williston folks distrusted the new "fiat money"; they still preferred the jingle of hard money in their purses and pockets. There were other changes, gradual ones, that unsettled some people. Out in Chicago, John McCormick had introduced his lightweight reaper that could be pulled by a single horse—that could be guided by a woman. Half a million of them poured out of the factories and Williston saw its share. It was one of the North's new-fangled secret weapons: now even more men could be spared for the war effort.

But in the next year, as the South, outnumbered in manpower nine to one, rallied its white population and fought a brilliant defensive war, more and more Union troops were pulled into the sea of high white tents forming around the exposed capital, the symbol of the Union, at Washington. Frank Forbes was now working on George Landon's farm, about a mile south of the village. Landon was busy. He was assessor of taxes and everything was being taxed, organs, pianos, gold watches and carriages as well as houses, barns, and livestock. Fourteen-year-old Forbes yearned to leave the brutal hard work of hand-mowing the meadows of the hilly ground where one of the new horse-drawn machines was useless, and join up—especially when he saw other young Williston men respond to the visits of veterans-turned-

recruiters to Town Hall. In August, 1862, after the great Union offensive against the Confederate capital at Richmond failed and the South won a second stunning victory at Bull Run, the frequency of those visits quickened. A second Chapin, this time Charles, enlisted from Williston in the Vermont First Cavalry Regiment and was assigned to Company L.

On his Morgan horse he paraded proudly through the streets of New York City, unfazed by the fact that the horses frequently slithered and fell on the muddy streets. When the 965 mounted Vermonters rode through New Jersey, the *Newark Advertiser* cheered them on:

> The Green Mountain Boys marched up Market Street amid expressions of the liveliest enthusiasm. The men are of a superior class, with true Yankee grit blazing from their eyes. The horses are small, compact and sinewy, and evidently capable of great endurance. So splendid a body of animals had never been seen in this city.

The Vermont troopers like Charles Chapin were much less impressed with their appearance, even feeling a little clownish-looking because of all the gear each had to carry: a sabre, pistols, haversack, canteen, lariat, ropes, feed-bag, blankets, cups, plates, frypans, coffee pots, shawls, mattresses, pillows, valises, skillets, brushes . . . .

The news from the South grew steadily worse. Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia marched north into Maryland. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson outmaneuvered the Union Army at Harper's Ferry on September 15th and captured 11,500 men in a day, including the entire Ninth Vermont Cavalry Regiment. Charles Chapin and his fellow Vermonters were to spend the next eight months on parole in Camp Douglas, a former Union prison camp in Chicago, until they could be exchanged for a like number of Confederate

prisoners. It was shocking news for the people back home and it jolted the town awake. The next day, September 17th, even worse news surged north over the telegraph wire. At Antietam Creek in Maryland, 23,386 men were killed or wounded in a single day, the worst carnage of the war. British and French military observers said they could not understand how anyone could have survived the murderous fire.

In the aftermath of Antietam, Vermont Governor Holbrook wrote to President Lincoln that "a very large additional force was needed to crush the rebellion." Recruitment had flagged throughout the North. Lincoln had just issued his Emancipation Proclamation to encourage slaves behind Confederate lines to join the Union armies. If Lincoln would call up enough troops to arm and equip a large new force, Vermont would advance the money to send its share. Lincoln, brandishing Holbrook's letter, told his Cabinet, "All my doubts and difficulties about calling for more men" were over. He issued the call for 300,000 more Union volunteers to serve for nine months: surely the war could be won with one more season of all-out conflict. Shortly afterward, he announced Vermont's quota of 4,898 men.

In the largest single outpouring of recruits, Williston responded with twenty-four volunteers in a single day, nearly one-fifth its Civil War output. As Governor Holbrook formed the Second Vermont Brigade, Williston's two dozen new recruits lined up in Town Hall and signed up on the table which became a sacred relic of the war. Bertram Brown, a twenty-four-year-old carriage maker who enlisted that day, later attested that they were marched off the five miles to the staging camp at Richmond "where we were drilled in the school of a soldier" for three weeks until they were ready to board a train to Brattleboro. The Williston men were assigned to Company F of the new Thirteenth Vermont Infantry Regiment. They were given physical examinations, learned to march, and were issued the highly-accurate new Springfield rifles. Oscar Phelps was twenty-seven; he was

James Patten of Company F poses outside camp in Virginia.

mustered into service as a corporal. Thomas Lee was twenty-one; a carriage maker by trade, he was designated a waggoner. George Baldwin, a twenty-two-year-old farmer, enlisted only six weeks after marrying Lucy Cooley. Peter Dubia was twenty-five when he signed up that day. Three Harper brothers, Charles, John and Nelson, enlisted on the same day. John served as Company F's cook and later opened a grocery store; Nelson served out his hitch in the infantry and re-enlisted in the artillery. Alfred and Milton Isham, twenty-one and eighteen, enlisted together and ultimately migrated to Ventura, California, where they became citrus growers. Nathan Johnson, a logger, joined up. And Thomas Johnson, a farmer who had been born in County Tyrone, Ireland, and migrated to Williston as a child in 1837, enlisted with Lawrence Kelly, who, despite being wounded at Gettysburg, re-enlisted and served until the end of the war. Alonzo, Harmon and Melancthon Lee all enlisted. Alonzo, eighteen, survived his term of service with the Thirteenth and re-upped in the First Volunteer Cavalry—only to be captured almost at once. After nearly two years in a Confederate prison camp, he was exchanged and fought the last days of the war in Grant's Army of the Potomac. William Whitney, a graduate of Williston Academy, was nineteen when he enlisted. He would fight at Gettysburg and survive to return to the family farm. The citizens of Williston could now read much more detailed and accurate accounts of their nine-months-soldiers than at any other time during the war. Enlisting as a lieutenant and serving as aide-de-camp to Brigadier General George Stannard, commander of the Second Vermont Brigade, was young George G. Benedict, son of the publisher of the *Burlington Free Press*. Each week, he sent clear, complete accounts of the brigade's movements to be published in his father's newspaper.

Finally leaving Brattleboro, Vermont, on October 11, 1862, only a month after signing up, the Thirteenth Vermont with its wide-eyed contingent of Willistonians travelled by

train to New Haven, then boarded a steamer bound for Jersey City. Another train took them through Philadelphia and Baltimore to Washington. On October 31st, the new Vermont Brigade marched into Virginia and bivouacked at Camp Vermont, where they were billeted at Fort Lyon. For much of that winter, as the men from Williston wrote home, they were assigned to picket duty guarding the approaches to the capital, the monotony of guard duty only occasionally broken by marches. Not until June of 1863, when Lee's army, fresh from a stunning victory at Chancellorsville, broke through the Union lines and marched north toward Pennsylvania did the Second Vermont Brigade see any real action.

The Confederates had already by-passed Washington and were marching through Maryland by the time General George Stannard received orders to quick-march his Vermonters north to reinforce the Union's 1st Army Corps. With the Thirteenth out front, the Vermonters averaged eighteen miles a day of forced marching in such intense heat that many soldiers collapsed of sunstroke by the side of the road. Arriving at Gettysburg after the first day's indecisive fighting, they were placed just left of the Bloody Angle and the grove of trees at the center of the Union line atop Cemetery Ridge. Corporal Bertram Brown, promoted from private only days before the march to Gettysburg, later wrote that "the next day, while supporting a battery on Cemetery Hill, a solid shot, after killing one artillery man and horse, buried itself in the ground between Lieutenant Naramore and myself." On the third day of the crucial battle, when Pickett's suicidal charge unleashed 15,000 quick-marching Southern veterans across a valley and up the gentle slope toward them, the Vermonters crouched behind a low stone wall as Confederate shells screamed over them.

Pale, terrified, trying to keep out of the path of the shells from 100 heavy Confederate guns only a mile away, the Williston men—some so tired and shell-shocked that they fell asleep during the two-hour cannonade!—awaited the random

Shrouded in smoke from woodstoves inside their log-palisaded tents, Williston soldiers of the Thirteenth Vermont Regiment spent the cold winter of 1862-63 at Camp Wolf Run Shoals in northern Virginia.

destruction, the inevitable charge. Corporal Brown wrote home that, "during the heavy artillery fire before the charge, Corporal Baldwin, one of my tentmates, was wounded by a shell within two feet of me while we were lying on the ground. I helped to carry him back to a barn used as a hospi-

tal and never saw him again." George Pine, only sixteen when he joined, crouched nearby on Cemetery Ridge. He had been ill when his unit was ordered to march to Gettysburg but he had tucked the surgeon's written excuse in his pocket and marched anyway. The smallest and youngest of his regiment, he was known as the Brave Recruit. An orphan, he would survive Gettysburg and re-enlist, but only to be fatally wounded at Meadowbridge ten months later. Albert Walston,

The Williston soldiers of Company F were in the center of the "hinge" that swung down to fire into the survivors of Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg as shown in this Harper's Weekly battlefield drawing.

a twenty-year-old farmer who had married Annie Batty only two weeks before shipping out, was knocked down three times in quick succession by the concussion of shells bursting nearby as Pickett's Virginians charged up the ridge. In what G. G. Benedict called "the pivotal movement of the pivotal battle of the war," the Williston troops from Company F of the 13th Vermont, raced downhill and outflanked the Confederates in the masterful "hinge" attack that destroyed what was left of Pickett's forces in their murderous enfilading fire.

When the battle was over, the high watermark of the Confederacy lay littered with 5,000 Confederate bodies. That second Confederate invasion of the North in nine months sent shock waves reverberating through the Union. It came hard on the heels not only of the Emancipation Proclamation but of the enactment of the first Conscription Act. All men between twenty and forty-five were now liable for military service. But they could avoid the draft by paying $300, a large

sum of money at the time, or procuring a substitute to enlist for three years. In Williston, only four men hired substitutes while, in all, 104 men volunteered. Apparently, only one man was ever drafted. They enlisted willingly and many received, in the bargain, recruitment bonuses which were increasingly important to their cash-poor, heavily-taxed families.

But for the poor to hire a substitute was impossible, and to fight for the abolition of slavery seemed a sure prescription for turning over low-paying jobs to thousands of freed blacks at war's end. One result was mayhem in working-class sections of New York City. Less than two weeks after

For the first time since the Revolutionary War era, paper money, called "greenbacks," went into circulation, replacing more popular gold and silver coins. The Union currency depreciated 40 percent while Confederate money depreciated 9,000 percent by war's end.

Gettysburg, four days of pillaging, burning of recruiting offices and lynchings broke out in immigrant neighborhoods there. The Union Army had to detach sorely-needed regiments from their pursuit of the wily Lee's retreating army to march north and quell the riots.

The nine-months-men from Vermont were shipped north to New York City. Enroute, one Williston soldier, Truman W. Blood, fell overboard from the *Illinois*, a steamer pressed hastily into service. He drowned when it narrowly avoided collision with a schooner in Chesapeake Bay. Arriving in New York harbor on July 21, 1863, the Vermonters pitched their white tents in Tompkins Square (near present-day New York University). But in the aftermath of the riots, a typhus epidemic was raging. Dr. Cornelius Chapin, Williston's first volunteer, contracted the highly contagious disease while treating stricken troops. This student of the classics, on the way home from his own odyssey to war, died in New York City on September 14th. His body was sent home and his family had the heartbreaking chore of meeting his flag-draped remains at the North Williston railroad station. Loading their son's coffin into their wagon, they drove his remains for burial in the town cemetery.

The escape of much of Lee's army and the continuation of the deadly stalemate led President Lincoln once more to call for 300,000 fresh recruits even as, in his Gettysburg Address, he invoked a "new spirit of freedom." Many of Williston's veterans of Gettysburg might have been expected to re-enlist, but most had seen enough. Some were recuperating from their wounds; others were maimed for life. Yet the President's latest call proved too strong for fifteen-year-old Frank Forbes and for many other Williston youths to resist. "We're Coming, Father Abraham, Three Hundred Thousand Strong" was the song they sang in the streets of Williston when Colonel Stephen Thomas, who had commanded Vermont troops in the lower Mississippi Valley campaign, came home from Louisiana to recruit his own regiment, the

Eighth Vermont Infantry. Colonel Thomas held three "war meetings" in Williston where he gave speeches that thrilled Frank Forbes and his young friends. "I think that the Colonel was the only speaker at those meetings," Forbes later recalled:

> Men came to hear him from all points of the town and from St. George and other towns. I went every time, I think. One night there was a big crowd out. The colonel spoke of the war in the South, of the need for men and how it was the duty of every young man to volunteer. And that night eighteen Williston men and boys enlisted. We put our names down on the paper for the list. I think that we signed on the same old desk that still stands on the platform in the town hall.

Here are the names of the Williston men who enlisted or re-enlisted that night, December 28, 1863:

1. Lawrence Kelly
2. Charles Christman
3. Prentice Bullock
4. John Larkin
5. Mike Burke
6. Henry Barber
7. Ben Charles
8. Bertram Brown
9. Mitch Osborne
10. Ransom Fay
11. Fred Bliss
12. Charles Sprague
13. John Rolo
14. Alonzo Lee
15. George Baldwin
16. Will Simonds
17. Robert Forbes
18. Francis Forbes

Frank Forbes began to keep a careful diary of the experiences of these Williston men:

> The next night we who had enlisted all came down to Deacon Miller's, and we were sworn into the service . . . . There we were mustered into the

Vermont military service. My father said that if I did not want to go now, he would go in my place, but I wanted to go and so would not hear to his going. My mother gave me a New Testament, and I carried it through all my service—the only thing that I started out with and brought back home after the war was over. All of us that had enlisted went to Brattleboro in a day or two. We were marched to the barracks. It was night when we arrived there. I had an upper bunk, and in the night my silver open faced watch fell to the floor and was ruined.

All of us tried to get into the cavalry but could not do so. Colonel Thomas was there in camp and was recruiting for his regiment—the 8th Vermont—that was stationed at New Orleans. The Colonel made us the proposition that if we would enter under him we could have a leave of absence of two weeks or so at home before we were to sail. Robert (Forbes) and I and four or five others from Williston signed up to go with Colonel Thomas, and then we went home for our leave of absence. Robert hurt his foot chopping [wood] while at home and so did not go with me when the time expired. When the leave was up, we again went to Brattleboro, from there by train to New London, Connecticut, and by boat from there to New York City. We arrived in the night and marched a long distance across the city in the snowy slush and boarded the old "Cahabah", and pulled out into the river and anchored there. We set sail the following day for New Orleans.

There were eleven hundred of us on board—mostly Vermonters. Besides the enlisted men there were sixty deserters and bounty-jumpers, who were under guard on the hurricane deck. Everything went well 'til we struck Cape Hatteras [off the coast

Alonzo Lee survived his nine months' tour in the Thirteenth, reenlisted as a cavalry trooper and was killed in 1864.

of North Carolina] where one of those terrible winter storms came upon us. It lasted three days and three nights. We all had to be shut up below decks during the storm which was especially severe.

The bulk heads had been removed to make way for the tiers of bunks that extended one above another the entire length of the ship. The bunks were arranged four or five high with just room to crawl under to get to one's bed. The only light came from the portholes, and these could not be opened on account of the great waves except on the side of the ship away from the wind, so the air in the place was very bad. The grub came down a long spout and at the word 'grub' we had to get what we could as it came down. Coffee came in pipes and faucets. That was the first time I ever had coffee to drink.

Every man was his own nurse and his own doctor. To make things pleasanter, all the bounty-jumpers and deserters had to come below during the storm, and they robbed and plundered the sick soldiers. In the darkness we could hear cries of "I'm robbed" ring through the ship. The deserters got mixed up with the others and so it was hard later to sort them out. Most of the men were sea sick, and as they lay in their bunks they would vomit over into the narrow alley-ways, 'til the filth was ankle-deep on the floor. To make matters worse, a sailing craft with one hundred head of cattle on board was in tow of the "Cahabah" and of course that delayed us and made it all the more tedious. Our supply of water ran low and we were allowed but a few swallows of warm water from the tanks that were carefully guarded. I was not sea sick—one of the few who were not . . . .

The storm stopped a day, I think, before we got to Key West. When we came on deck, one of

Alfred W. Isham came back from Gettysburg and took up farming.

our men, crazed by the storm and terrible experiences, climbed onto the wheelhouse and sprang into the sea. . . . He must have been eaten by the sharks that followed the ship. I saw him jump with my own eyes. There were some other men who

had to be watched, so deranged had they become during those three days of sufferings. We stopped at Key West to water up, and here we felt for the first time the hot southern sun . . . . We left the cattle here. We remained at Key West only an hour or two.

About one day later, I think, we entered the mouth of the Mississippi, and sailed up the river to Algiers which is opposite to New Orleans. We landed at Algiers. There we joined the regiments and companies we were assigned to and went into camp. We remained at Algiers two or three weeks, and we put in that time drilling and learning the manual of arms. A corporal or sergeant would take a man out and drill him on the manual and teach him to march, saying, "Hay-foot, straw-foot" to keep him in step. Some of the men like old Mike Burke and John Larkin never could learn to do it, much to the disgust of the drillmaster. I never had any trouble learning the manual.

One night, the long [drum] roll beat and we formed a line of battle, for it was said that [Confederate] General Kirby Smith, the rebel commander in Louisiana, was going to make an attack on us, but it was a false alarm. After we arrived there, his army disbanded into guerrilla bands and then our regiment was detached into companies to hunt guerrillas. This was up near the mouth of the Red River. [We were] detached and located in various places along the river doing picket duty, guarding the railroad, fighting mosquitoes, rattlesnakes and alligators.

Company D was guarding the railroad and the mosquitoes were so thick and large that one man became so crazed with them that he took off all his clothes and hollered and yelled and went running

Albert Wolston of Company F was knocked down three times by concussion from shells exploding nearby during Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg.

down the railroad track. At the same time we heard an awful noise in the swamps, a slashing, which turned out to be a drove of mules—as crazy as the man from the mosquitoes.

While we were in camp there, a man from Williston, Johnny McGargin, and a native of Louisiana who had joined the company got to scrapping and chawed one another up like bull dogs. They were parted and taken down to the bayou to be washed up and I jumped in and swam away from them. Saw no more of him for nine days. There was some cavalry stationed eight or nine miles below us who said that one of our infantrymen was on the shore a few miles below. A detail was formed from the regiment and they went after him, brought him back and buried him.

On the fifth of July [1864], we sailed on the *St. Mary* for Virginia. About half way across we struck the Confederate commerce raider *CSS Alabama*. The captains passed a few words, we having been ordered to get out our guns from the hold as soon as lights were sighted. We stood at attention while the captain of our boat and the captain of the *Alabama* talked. There was nothing more said. We expected to be sunk or all taken prisoners. If so, it is very strange that we were not captured. We stopped at Fortress Monroe [Virginia] and expected to land but received orders to proceed to Washington (on July 13th).

We marched right out up past the White House. Someone had stolen my shoes and I had to go barefoot. It was early in the morning but Abraham Lincoln was there and reviewed us as we marched on (to) Fort Stevens, northwest of the Capitol. Abraham Lincoln seemed to be standing on something, he was so tall. He was viewing the

enemy, and just before an officer, a surgeon, had been killed beside him. He (Lincoln) was cautioned, but did not heed it. The enemy was in plain view on a high ridge about a mile to the north. It was the rear guard of General Jubal Early's Confederate command. The battle was fought the day before. Dead soldiers were seen as we passed on. This was my first sight of a battlefield. (It was Lincoln's, too.) The next horrid thing was two deserters which had been left hanging, one on each side of the road, in a piece of woods that we passed through. They were a warning to us.

On July 17th, we marched four miles and camped on the Blue Ridge. On the 19th we stayed in camp all day and then on the following day we marched across the Shenandoah. As we were going through Shisker's Gap the captain gave orders to the men that not a man should leave the company. But Tuttle and Daniels left the line of march with some canteens and went to a spring a few rods in the bushes. When they came to the spring, they were met by a crowd of Confederate Colonel John Mosby's men, taken prisoners, and marched away, searched, robbed of their guns, uniforms and all belongings.

Once, near Charleston, West Virginia, between twelve and one o'clock at night, the lieutenant came around and whispered to us to get up and move immediately, and be careful not to let our canteens rattle or to make any noise. It was the darkest night you ever saw. Looked as though it was going to rain. We fell back to Maryland Heights. There I saw the biggest hog I ever saw in my life. We scared him up as we went into camp. We went for him and killed him and had some port steak for breakfast. Oh, it was tough! Right away

our company was detailed to support [an artillery] battery which was stationed right on top of the Heights. . . . The Rebels were a short distance farther away. We laid there all day, supporting that battery, which kept firing all day. We fired also. One of the guns was demolished by a rebel shot and two or three of the battery men were killed or wounded. We lay in between the pieces.

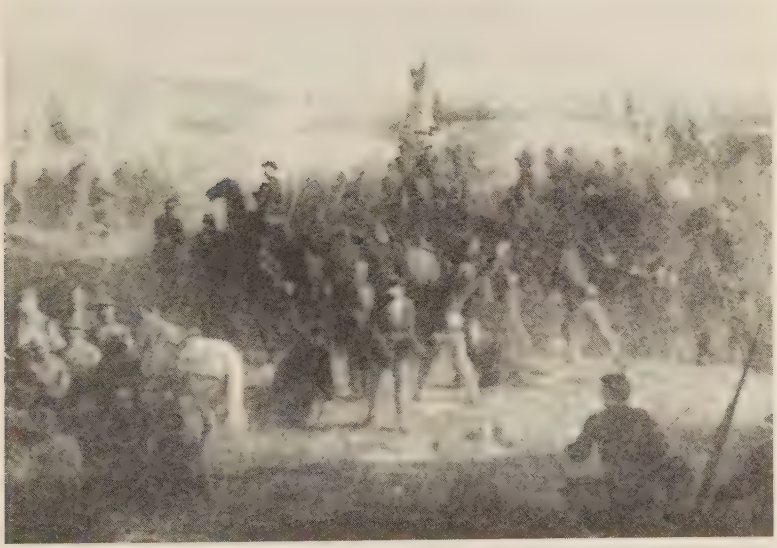
One day we were in camp with the enemy so near that we had been ordered not to fire off a gun in camp. But there came a big drove of hogs into camp and the temptation was so strong that some of the men in the 47th Pennsylvania could not resist shooting a few of the porkers. In fact, we all took after the hogs and clubbed and bayoneted them, I helping all I could. Our company got one, killed it and dressed it. In a few minutes a half dozen of us were put under arrest by the officer of the day for disobeying orders. Our guns were taken from us. But soon we were given them back again and were detailed for picket duty, and that was all the punishing we got. It was the only time I was ever under arrest.

We maneuvered and maneuvered and maneuvered, just as we had been doing during the last year and all to no purpose. But Lincoln and Grant knew that something must be done in the Shenandoah and so on the 6th of August (1864) Philip Sheridan took up his headquarters at Harper's Ferry in an old hotel. Sheridan was only thirty-three or thirty-four years of age and weighed only 115 pounds. Soon there was a change in the Valley of the Shenandoah. . . .

We lay in camp at Harrisonburg two or three days, and then marched on south up the Valley as far as Staunton. There was a big flour mill. We got

the old miller to work and while we camped there we had pancakes three times a day. It was here that we saw little boys standing at the gates of the houses in the village waving the Stars and Stripes. They must have been staunch Rebels there, but this they did to protect their property, and probably when the Southern troops went through the town they would have been seen out waving the Stars and Bars.

Now Sheridan determined to return north as far as Strasburg destroying, according to the commands of General Grant, every bit of food, grain, and produce of any sort that would give comfort and aid to the enemy. The Shenandoah Valley was one of the best and chief sources of supplies or food for the armies of the Confederacy.



Frank Forbes was among the Vermonters General Philip Sheridan ordered up front during their famous stand at Cedar Creek, Virginia, depicted in this Justin Scott painting in the State Capitol in Montpelier.

The 8th Vermont was the rear guard of the army as it passed down the Valley. . . . We were stretched way across the valley. There, we built breastworks. We laid there 'till the 19th, the date of the famous Battle of Cedar Creek. Sheridan was in Washington, called to Washington by the War Department.

The night before the battle, I was detailed to go on picket. About 200 men went on picket. When we got out there, they lined us up and an officer wanted to know if our guns were loaded. Everything went all right 'til about two o'clock when I went on for the second time. The Rebels marched their army along under the mountain and took off the pickets of the 8th Corps, capturing them. They made them think that they (the Rebs) were the 5th New York Regiment, a cavalry regiment that had been sent out on reconnoitering duty and was supposed to be returning to camp at that time. After they had got the pickets they overpowered the 8th corps in their camp, and that was the firing we heard on our left. Colonel Thomas went out to see what was going on and was told to surrender. He said that it was too early in the morning and wheeled and got away. He went back and ordered our brigade right up to the front.

The captain said to us, "Come on, boys!" The rebs were close on us, but had not yet discovered us on the picket. We went to the rear as fast as we could, and the captain said, "Every man for himself. Get back as best you can." Just when we had gotten a few rods from our post and were going through some bushes, we looked around and saw some rebel cavalry on the spot where a few minutes before we had been stationed. They dismounted and took after us. We think that they dismounted

in order to save their horses, for horses were scarcer than hen's teeth in the Confederate army, and they (the cavalry) feared the infantry. They fired on us and shouted "Surrender!", but we were a match for them on foot and we ran on as fast as we could go. A fellow named Asa Thompson of my company and I hung together, and we went through one or two creeks.

The main body of the army fell back before the Rebs and formed a line of battle [between] Newtown and Halltown. When we were running, we saw a few mule teams that had tipped over down a bank, and saw a lot of hard-tack spilled out on the ground. We were hungry and so filled our pockets with them. Then Thompson and I came to an old family burying ground. We could see a Rebel skirmish-line coming right behind us on the oblique, fast. Thompson said, "I'm going to get two or three of them fellows!" Well, he and I fired a few shots, but I said, "They'll get us, and I'm going", and I ran on. He stayed and in a little way I looked back and saw that they had killed him there. Thompson, who was killed in the cemetery, was a brave fellow, standing right up to fire and refusing to run at all 'til he had shot two or three to avenge the death of his brother who had been killed at Port Hudson.

Well, then I joined the regiment. The infantry was forming a line of battle. Then was the golden opportunity for the Confederates to make a second charge and drive us out of the field and out of the Valley to Washington, but they were eating in our camp and we were told later that their great General Early was already drunk—and so the great opportunity for the Rebels slipped away from them.

It was nearly nine months more before Forbes and the other survivors of the Cedar Creek campaign were mustered out at war's end.

Other Williston men who had enlisted in "Father Abraham's" last great call for troops in December of 1863 had seen less dramatic action. Amos Walston had left the family's large farm in the Oak Hill section and joined the Ninth Vermont. His regiment was assigned to guard a railroad center near Morehead City, North Carolina. On Dec. 27, 1863, they made a thirty-mile forced march at night to capture twenty-eight Confederates without firing a shot—only to be counterattacked by General Pickett and 2,500 Confederates. In his first fight only a few weeks after leaving Williston, Walston and his comrades fought and killed Southerners until it was too dark to see anymore. In September, 1864, his regiment was transported to the trenches outside Petersburg, Virginia, scene of the bitterest trench warfare of the war. There, he began to divide his time between living in a hole in the ground and standing in a rifle pit within 200 yards of Confederate cannon. On November 11, 1864, the Confederates launched an attack on the forward picket line held by Pennsylvania militia, who broke and fled. The Vermont Ninth held, defending the redoubt. After seven weeks of constant heavy fire, Walston and his comrades were relieved. Shifted to join the remainder of the Second Vermont Brigade under General Stannard's command, Amos Walston's company took part in the bayonet charge that carried Battery Morris as the Vermonters took Fort Harrison. The official battle report was succinct: the Ninth "made the charge, carried the works and drove the rebel defenders to the rear in confusion."

By late March of 1865, Lee decided to abandon Petersburg's trenches, burn the Confederate capital at Richmond and march west to escape being trapped by Grant and Sherman's advances. On April 3rd, 1865, Amos Walston and his comrades received word that the Confederates had gone from Richmond. With other Vermonters, Walston ran

Corporal Bertram Brown of Company F was promoted only days before Gettysburg; a cannonball narrowly missed him as he crouched atop Cemetery Ridge awaiting the Confederate assault.

through the blazing streets between lines of cheering and praying blacks who had been slaves an hour before. Walston and his friends only stopped when they reached the Confederate White House. Then they ransacked the Confederate archives building looking for the Vermont state flag captured when the original Ninth Regiment had been outmaneuvered and captured by Stonewall Jackson at Harper's Ferry nearly three years earlier.

By the time Amos Walston and Frank Forbes and the other lucky veterans could return home safely to Williston in June, 1865, after the Confederacy was defeated, Abraham Lincoln had been shot four years to the day after he had first sought Vermont's help to hold the Union together. Another son of Williston was there the day when Lincoln went to survey the smoldering remains of the Confederate capital he had so long fought to capture. Lucius Chittenden, (see Chapter Six) later described the scene when Lincoln arrived on April 4, 1865:

> Multitudes of the emancipated crowd craned and sought to touch the garments of the benefactor, as with streaming eyes they shout their thanksgivings. Truly, as [Lincoln] said, 'It is a great thing to be responsible for the freedom of a race.' Note the historic picture as he removes his hat and bows in silence to the old Negro who exclaimed, 'May the good Lord bless you, President Lincoln.' Truthfully did he [Lincoln] write at the time, 'That bow upsets the forms, customs and ceremonies of centuries.

In Williston, as in the army, the people wore bands of black crepe on their left arms when Lincoln died.

Years later, Frank Forbes described what it was like to come home:

> In Burlington, we marched to the Town Hall where we were given a great dinner and welcome home. After dinner I rode out to Williston with one of the men named Ingraham, the headquarters drummer boy. We hired horses to ride and came home and stayed all night. I remember seeing Father and Mother, who were probably glad to see me. They killed the fatted calf. It seemed strange to sleep in a house again, and to hear rats running in the partition.

Not all of Williston's sons lived to come home and be honored at war's end. Some had died slowly, horribly, far from home. Charles B. Chapin, a member of Company L of the Vermont First Cavalry Regiment, whose brother Cornelius had died of typhus in New York City, was taken prisoner in May, 1864. In his diary, he recorded what it was like to be captured and doomed to the worst Confederate prison of them all, Andersonville, now renamed Plains, Georgia:

> Was up at dawn so stiff and lame I could hardly walk, but had to walk fifteen miles. Stopped but three times on the way. I came very near giving out, blisters on my feet two inches long and one wide. Packed fifty into a railroad car, also two guards. Stayed in this till next noon. If anybody puts his head or arm out of the window he is shot if the guard's aim is steady. One fellow had his forehead marked yesterday in this way.
>
> Arrived at Camp Sumter, Andersonville, about 10 o'clock. Set in the sun a long time, then taken to the prison. Such a looking crowd I never saw, some black as niggers, the dirtiest beings I ever saw. Twenty-five to thirty die per day. Water poor, washed in a small brook that runs through the

camp. A minor deserter was going to mark one of our boys' head. Luckily, he concluded not to. Washed a shirt in cold soap for one dollar greenback. Heard Sherman had taken Atlanta; 1200 prisoners came in today: now about 20,000 here. So much suffering I never dreamed of as there is in this prison. The wrath of God must soon burst on the Confederates: 327 died in 24 hours.

Alonzo H. Sherman quick-marched north for three days with Company I toward Gettysburg.

> Drew 12 hard tack for six of us. Got no more till Monday afternoon (two days later). Have drawn no rations since Tuesday—feel very faint. Drew 10 loaves of bread, a bit of bacon and a bucket of soup for twenty men. Drew flour and meat for two days, set up most all night to cook it. Drew about a mouthful of bacon. Paid 10 cts. for a potato about as large as a butternut, which I ate raw. Drew a few green beans, but so lame I can't get wood to cook them. Our boys paid $5 for a loaf not larger than my fist. I gave $20 for six loaves. Drew nothing but a pint of cooked rice, and a very small piece of meat. Did not draw any rations today, expect to draw mush in the morning. On June 26 it was pleasant and awful hot. The maggots claimed our beef, but we finally drove them off, had steak for breakfast and soup for dinner. Drew raw meal and bacon . . . we have nice times cooking without wood.

Chapin barely survived six more months at Andersonville until he was all but starved to death. He was paroled in November, 1864, and shipped north for medical treatment in a Union hospital in Northern Virginia. He died of the effects of his imprisonment in January of 1865. Only three months before the war ended, his emaciated body was shipped home to Williston. His mother reported to a brother, still at war, that she found he had clung to two things until he died, his diary and the New Testament that he had taken with him when he had enlisted on that heady day in August, 1862.

By this time, war had exhausted Williston. While families were numerous, many of Williston's less than 1,500 citizens were children. Fully 127 men had answered the call to war, as much as one-fourth of its adult male population. The war had also severely drained its life savings. By war's end, no one stepped forward to serve when the governor called for more volunteers. At the town meeting in the Spring of 1865,

there was a heated debate on whether to offer new recruits $150, $200 or $300 bounty money to induce them to sign up. The debate only ended when the tired townspeople pledged $300 of tax money per enlistee. But everyone must have known it was a safe bet. No one was left able or willing to go.

They also passed a resolution that day to build a war memorial when it was all over. But when the fighting stopped, when the last soldier came home, except for Fourth of July and Memorial Day parades, there was no desire to erect a memorial even to the veterans of Cedar Creek, Gettysburg and Port Hudson. And, as soon as they could, the townspeople pulled down the 150-pound flagstaff in front of the town hall—before it fell and hurt someone.

CHAPTER SIX

A Williston Family Album:

1. The Chittendens

The founding family of Williston remained among its most illustrious throughout the Nineteenth Century, producing a second Vermont governor, two judges, the wife of a governor and the wife of a Congressman, militia officers, and a sheriff. Thomas and Elizabeth Chittenden had ten children, all born in Salisbury, Connecticut:

1. *Mabel*, the first child, was born in 1750. She married Thomas Barney, a Williston farmer, and lived about one-half mile west of the Village in what was later known as the Metcalf Place.

2. *Noah* was born in 1753. He learned farming and lived in Jericho on the intervale opposite his parents' farm. He was the first sheriff of Chittenden County and the judge of the county and probate courts. He also served as town representative in the General Assembly and state councillor. He had two children, Thomas, who also became a judge, and Anna, who married Governor Truman Galusha. He died in 1834.

3. *Hannah* was born in 1756 and married Colonel Isaac Clark of Castleton, who was distinguished for his bravery during the War of 1812.

The Giles Chittenden house, shown here from the south, faces snowcapped Mount Mansfield in this photo by Fred Stetson.

4. *Mary*, born in 1758, married Jonas Galusha of Shaftsbury. He served variously as town representative, sheriff of Bennington County, judge of the Bennington County Court and Governor of Vermont for nine years. He was a staunch Federalist and critic of his father-in-law's politics.

5. *Elizabeth*, born in 1761, married James Hill of Charlotte, a prosperous farmer.

6. *Beulah*, born in 1763, married Matthew Lyon of Fair Haven, an Irish immigrant who came to America as an indentured servant and became the only man ever to represent two different states in Congress. Cashiered after the Jericho Fort mutiny in 1776 he was re-instated as a Revolutionary War officer and earned distinction for his bravery. A member of the Vermont General Assembly for fifteen years, he was jailed under the Alien and Sedition Act for his radical printings. He engaged in a famous fight on the floor of Congress during his

three years representing Vermont in the nation's capital. The "Spitting Lyon," as he became known after the Congressional imbroglio, served as judge of Rutland County Court before he and Beulah moved to Kentucky in 1801, where he was re-elected to Congress.

7. *Martin*, born in 1766, was a farmer who settled in Jericho across the river from his parents. Graduated from Dartmouth College, he was town representative from Williston to the General Assembly for two years, clerk of the Chittenden County Court four years, judge of the county court for ten years and probate judge for two years. Elected to Congress from 1803 to 1813, he served as the Federalist governor of Vermont for two years during the War of 1812. Calling up 10,000 militia when the British invaded in 1814, on November 10, he issued a proclamation recalling the 3rd Vermont Brigade from Plattsburgh asserting that Vermont militia should not serve outside the State. The Vermont officers refused the governor's orders: "An invitation or order to desert the standard of our country will never be obeyed by us." A trustee of the University of Vermont, he lived until 1840, when he died at age 74 and was buried near his father. He had twelve children.

8. *Giles*, born in 1768, married Polly Hawley and lived on the farm adjoining his father's in the handsome Georgian-style house his father built for him in 1796. It is the oldest building still standing in Williston and is now part of the James McCullough family's Catamount Family Center. Mrs. McCullough, James' mother, was descended from Smith Wright, who acquired the house in the mid-19th Century. Giles, who was colonel of Williston's first cavalry troop and served as Williston's representative in the General Assembly, was forced to sell it at a sheriff's sale in 1817. He became entangled in his brother, Truman's, legal affairs after heavy fines were imposed over Truman's dealings with import duties. A nephew, Thomas, of Jericho, bought the estate at auction to keep it out of federal hands. Giles, who had six

The Giles Chittenden house was built in 1796.

Current occupants of the Giles Chittenden mansion are, left to right, Jim McCullough, a descendant of Smith Wright, his wife, Lucy, and their daughter, Abby. The McCulloughs operate the popular Catamount Family Resort on the old estate.

The Giles Chittenden house as it appeared a century ago.

children, spent the rest of his life living in a small plain brick house at 132 Colchester Avenue in Burlington. He died insolvent.

The section of his Williston land containing the elegant 1796 house was reserved for his wife as her widow's dower. She later deeded the house to Charles Miller, son of Elisha and Sarah Miller. Charles Miller's widow sold the property to Smith Wright: it then included "166 acres of fertile soil which supports 30 cows and other stock." It has passed down through the family of Smith Wright, pioneer in cold storage, and now is a popular all-year-round recreation center.

9. *Truman* was born in 1770 and married Lucy Jones. A farmer, he lived atop French Hill. He was a justice of the peace for thirty years, a probate judge, state councillor, University of Vermont trustee and town representative in the General Assembly for four years. Father of fourteen children,

The Truman Chittenden house was built sometime before 1835.

he temporarily lost his lands when the U.S. government sued him in 1823 for failure to meet the obligations of Customs House bonds he and a partner gave to the U.S. Treasury. Truman lived for many years in his father, the late Governor's house, which survived until a 1926 fire. (The Clark farmhouse is built on three walls of its foundations.)

10. *Electa*, born in 1773, married Jonathan Spafford of Richmond, the son of Major Jonathan Spafford, who had come to Vermont in 1773 to help found the town of Williston.

The most illustrious Chittenden of the Nineteenth Century, however, may have been Lucius Eugene Chittenden, great-grandson of the founder of Williston. Born to Giles Chittenden, Jr., and Betsey Hollenbeck in Williston on May 24, 1824, he attended Williston Academy and was graduated from the University of Vermont. He married Mary Gates on September 15, 1852; they had a son and two daughters.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

MARTIN CHITTENDEN, Esquire,

GOVERNOR, CAPTAIN-GENERAL, AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF, IN AND OVER THE STATE OF VERMONT,

A PROCLAMATION:

Whereas, it appears, that the Third Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of this State, has been ordered from our frontiers to the defence of a neighbouring State:—And, whereas it further appears, to the extreme regret of the Captain General, that a part of the Militia of said Brigade have been placed under the command, and at the disposal, of an Officer of the United States, out of the jurisdiction or control of the Executive of this State, and have been actually marched to the defence of a sister State, fully competent to all the purposes of self defence, whereby an extensive section of our own Frontier is left, in a measure, unprotected, and the peaceable, good citizens thereof are put in great jeopardy, and exposed to the retaliatory incursions and ravages of an exasperated enemy:—And, whereas, disturbances, of a very serious nature, are believed to exist, in consequence of a portion of the Militia having been thus ordered out of the State:—

Therefore....to the end, that these great evils may be provided against, and, as far as may be, prevented for the future:—

Be it Known....that such portion of the Militia of said Third Brigade, in said Third Division, as are now doing duty, in the State of New-York, or else-where, beyond the limits of this State, both Officers and men, are hereby ordered and directed, by the Captain General and Commander in Chief of the Militia of the State of Vermont, forthwith to return to the respective places of their usual residence, within the territorial limits of said Brigade, and there to hold themselves in constant readiness to act, in obedience to the Orders of Brigadier General Jacob Davis, who is appointed, by the Legislature of this State, to the command of said Brigade.

And the said Brigadier General Davis is hereby ordered and directed, forthwith, to see, that the Militia of his said Brigade be completely armed and equipped, as the Law directs, and holden in constant readiness to march on the shortest notice, to the defence of the Frontiers; and, in case of actual invasion, without further Orders, to march with his said Brigade, to act, either in co-operation with the Troops of the United States, or separately, as circumstances may require, in repelling the enemy from our territory, and in protecting the good citizens of this State from their ravages or hostile incursions.

And in case of an event, so seriously to be deprecated, it is hoped and expected, that every citizen, without distinction of party, will fly at once to the nearest post of danger, and that the only rallying word will be—"OUR COUNTRY."

Feeling, as the Captain General does, the weight of responsibility, which rests upon him, with regard to the Constitutional duties of the Militia, and the sacred rights of our citizens to protection from this great class of community, so essentially necessary in all free countries; at a moment like, when they are so imminently exposed to the dangers of hostile incursions, and domestic difficulties, he cannot conscientiously discharge the trust reposed in him by the voice of his fellow citizens, and by the Constitution of this and the United States, without an unequivocal declaration, that, in his opinion, the Military strength and resources of this State, must be reserved for its own defence and protection, *exclusively*—excepting in cases provided for, by the Constitution of the United States; and then, under orders derived *only* from the Commander in Chief.

Given under my hand at Montpelier, this 10th day of November, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirteen; and of the Independence of the United States, the thirty eighth.

MARTIN CHITTENDEN.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND,

SAMUEL SWIFT, *Secretary.*

Governor Martin Chittenden's order for Vermont militia to return from New York during the British invasion of 1814.

After reading law in the office of W. L. Whittemore in Swanton, he was admitted to the Vermont bar in 1844. He practiced law and became an avid naturalist and active member of the Democratic Party. When the Fugitive Slave Act was enacted by Congress in 1850, the Vermont Democratic Party supported it. The Act provided that every citizen was obliged to assist in the apprehension, and return to their slave masters in the South, any runaway slaves who had escaped to the North. Chittenden withdrew from the Democratic Party at its state convention in 1852 to help form the Free Soil Party. Elected to the State Senate, Chittenden served from 1857 to 1858, when he switched to the newly-formed Republican Party.

As the Civil War loomed in 1861, Chittenden attended a peace conference in Washington, D.C., as a delegate from Vermont. There, he met Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, who had helped found the Free Soil Party and now was a U.S. senator. Chittenden hoped his previous efforts would earn him the post of customs inspector in Burlington. He failed to win the post, but when President Lincoln appointed Chase as his Secretary of the Treasury, Chase asked Chittenden to become Register of the Treasury. It was his duty personally to sign all government bonds issued by the Federal government.

In 1862, to create a larger supply of money, the Federal government for the first time since the Revolutionary War began to issue paper currency, called "greenbacks." Chittenden's signature appeared on several issues, including legal-tender notes, compound-interest Treasury notes, interest-bearing notes and National Bank notes. His signature was usually printed. But it was still required by law that Chittenden hand-sign every government bond.

On Friday, March 20, 1863, President Lincoln summoned Lucius Chittenden to a meeting with Secretary of the Treasury Chase and Secretary of State William H. Seward. They must act quickly, Lincoln warned them, to avert a catastrophe. The Confederate Navy had placed an order in

Register of the U.S. Treasury Lucius E. Chittenden never completely recovered after signing his name 12,500 times in three days during the Civil War.

Liverpool, England, for two ironclad warships that would be more heavily armed and armored than any ships in the Union Navy. The Laird Brothers shipyard had already built the devastating commerce-raider *CSS Alabama* in a similar transaction. Lincoln and the others were shown sketches of the ships with their 4-inch thick armor and twin gun turrets and battering-ram prows capable of skewering most Union ships, which were still made of wood. An American agent at the meeting said that the shipbuilders would sell the vessels to the Union if it would pay more than the Confederates. English law forbade selling arms to either combatant but they were being sold through Egyptian intermediaries.

President Lincoln explained that the U.S. was sending $10 million in bonds to purchase the ships but the British intermediaries would not accept a check! A British-owned Cunard steamship would sail on schedule from New York with or without the bonds on Monday—and it was already Friday. The ship would not wait: its captain had already refused a U.S. government request for more time. The bonds must be autographed and carried by train to New York City over the weekend.

In earlier crises, Lucius Chittenden had signed as many as 2,000 to 3,000 government bonds in a single seven-hour workday. This time, there were to be 10,000 bonds worth $1,000 each—at least four days' exhausting work. Unsure he was physically capable of signing that many bonds clearly in so short a time, Chittenden told Lincoln he would sign until

his strength was gone and then resign. Lincoln must be ready to appoint a new Register of the Treasury at a moment's notice to finish the task. But Chittenden calculated this would happen on Sunday and that raised the question whether an appointment on the Sabbath—not a normal day for government business—would be legal. And what would the British say about two different signatures? To his horror, when Chittenden reached his office he learned that there were only 7,500 bonds of $1,000 face value available: the rest would have to be $500 bonds. Now he would have to sign 12,500 bonds in 48 hours!

About noon on Friday, March 20, 1863, Chittenden sat down behind his desk in the Treasury Building beside the White House and, as clerks brought him stacks of bonds, began to dig his steel-pointed pen in the inkwell, plane off the excess ink on its rim and swiftly, neatly inscribe his tall, simple signature: L. E. Chittenden. His first two initials flowed quickly, smoothly with a single stroke into his last name. He had never adopted a fancy signature so common at the time. Fortunately, he never spelled out his first name. A clerk whisked away and blotted one bond as another clerk slid another bond in front of Chittenden.

In the first seven hours of his ordeal that Friday, Chittenden managed to sign an astonishing 3,700 bonds. Only 8,800 to go! By Saturday morning, he was exhausted. His right hand and arm had swollen; he was in intense pain. A doctor administered stimulants and kept Chittenden well-fed. For relief, Chittenden shifted the pen, gripping it between his thumb and first finger: his signature held up.

But by Saturday night it appeared that Lucius Chittenden could not go on. He recounted the story years later in his memoirs, how he walked around his office, forcing himself to stay awake, trying to keep his circulation flowing, struggling to find some comfortable position while he signed. It had become as difficult by Sunday morning to sign a single bond as a hundred on Friday. But by Sunday noon, he had

finished. In little more than forty-eight hours he had signed his name 12,500 times! The bonds were wrapped in ten $1 million bundles: the stack was 6-feet-four inches high, as tall as Lincoln. They were shipped under armed guard on a special train to New York City where they were carried to the British ship on time. They arrived in England safely. Abraham Lincoln had attempted to outbid the Confederacy; Lucius Chittenden had made Lincoln's gamble good.

Giles Chittenden's weathered gravestone in the plot of Williston's founding family.

Lucius Chittenden had not been able to sleep that Sunday night, so great was the pain in his arm. After three days without sleep, he collapsed on Monday. It was years before he fully recovered his health. In a final strange twist to this usually-overlooked episode of Civil War history, the

This granite monument commemorates the highlights of Martin Chittenden's political career. In addition to the governorship, he was a Member of Congress for ten years.

Williston-born hero whose pen was undoubtedly worth so many swords could have stopped signing before he experienced the slightest discomfort. In London, American Ambassador Charles Francis Adams (the grandson of John Adams and son of John Quincy Adams) decided not to get into a bidding contest with the Confederates. He was already successfully lobbying the British government, protesting loudly each capture or sinking by the Alabama. He was also reluctant to raise the level of interest in illegal shipbuilding by raising the profits in a bidding war. He used $4 million of the Chittenden-signed bonds to negotiate a loan from the Bank of England. He returned the remaining $6 million to Washington.

After the stunning Union victory at Gettysburg that summer of 1863, British public opinion turned against the Confederacy. The British government seized the two completed ironclads in the Liverpool shipyard and made them British Navy warships, naming them the *Scorpion* and the *Wivern*.

Serving as Register of the Treasury until August 10, 1864, Lucius Chittenden resigned and moved to New York City to regain his health. He returned to Williston frequently, accompanying the coffins of his parents and three sisters to their graves near the remains of Governor Thomas Chittenden. It was not until 1868 that he was able to resume his law practice after a gap of seven years. After publishing his memoirs and many papers on government finance, he died in Burlington on July 22, 1902, at the age of seventy-eight.

2. The Millers of Maple Hill

Among the earliest settlers of Massachusetts Bay Colony, Thomas Miller crossed the Atlantic on the *Hector* in 1629, and made his way west to the Connecticut Valley where, with his bride, Sarah Marshfield, he helped to found Springfield.

Miller believed in making friends with the Indians, and when Springfield was attacked in 1695 during King William's

Elisha Miller Jr.'s house, called Maple Hill, was moved from Muddy Brook and finally demolished in 1960. It was a working dairy farm for many years.

War, he was naturally chosen to go out and parley with them. But the Indians he met were not the Indians he knew. They were strangers, probably St. Francis Abenakis from French Canada raiding along the Winooski River and down their traditional warrior path in the Connecticut Valley. They killed Thomas Miller.

Thomas and Sarah Miller's grandson, Solomon, born in 1731, married Desire Smith. He fought in the Battle of Bennington, as did his brother, Caleb. For many years an iron manufacturer in Wallingford, he came to Williston when the town was organized in 1786. Their son, Harry Miller, built the large cupola-roofed brick house where the Bradishes lived for many years at the intersection of Oak Hill Road and Route 2. But for many years the Millers lived near Muddy Brook at the west end of town, where they lived up to their name—they were millers. Solomon and his brother Elisha Miller were the

first to occupy land in the center of the village of Williston. Born in West Springfield, Massachusetts in 1761, Solomon fought in the Revolution as a teenage boy, taking part in the Battle of Bennington and in the capture of Burgoyne at Saratoga by the time he was sixteen. For several years before he came to Williston to settle in 1786, he was engaged with Nathaniel Chipman in iron manufacturing at Wallingford. Solomon became justice of the peace and Williston Town Clerk from 1794 to 1815. Solomon served as clerk of the Vermont Supreme Court and the Chittenden County Court, was the probate judge and a member of the Governor's Council. He died in 1847 at age 87. This was about the same time as his brother, Elisha, died.

Dissenters from the Church of England, freedom fighters in the Revolution, the Millers were probably the best known dissenters in Williston in the nineteenth century. In 1808, a Congregational missionary from Connecticut stayed for the night at Solomon Miller's house. After meeting the Millers and their friends, he recorded in his diary, "The most popular and leading men which compose the legislature of the State of Vermont are infidels, Baptists, and Nothingists—and all such harmonize in such measures as are calculated to outlaw all religion."

The Millers were known for large families. Elisha Miller fathered seventeen children. His second wife, Sarah Eliot, was descended from John Eliot, a famous missionary to the Pequod Indians of Connecticut. Solomon came to Williston in an oxcart from Wallingford with two small children in 1794 and built a log cabin near the present Catholic Church on Route 2. A large oil painting of Elisha and Sarah survives in the Dorothy Parker Alling Library.

Practically the first white native of Williston, Laura Miller, Elisha's daughter, never married. She taught school and kept house for her brother, Deacon William Miller, who introduced the breed of Merino sheep to Williston which made the town flourish in the 1830's. The house, a large colo-

Deacon William Miller, whose blistered portrait hangs in the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library, convicted an arsonist who later escaped and destroyed

his house. The damaged portrait was among the few surviving articles. The stern Aunt Laura who presided over family gatherings still faces him.

nial style dwelling southeast of the Federated Church, had a fireplace and at least one relative in every room. The last Miller family reunion took place at Thanksgiving, 1876. There were two long tables lined with relatives and weighed down with two large turkeys. Aunt Laura had to have help with this meal—her nephew George and his bride Hester assisted with the cooking just before they left for Iowa. Deacon William doubled as a justice of the peace. A convict

Long summer afternoons of music and games occupied the Parker sisters in their backyard circa 1907.

A nurse rocks Dorothy Parker Alling, age two.

he had sent to prison escaped and set fire to the house, destroying it. Only the blistered oil painting in the Dorothy Alling Library, a sideboard, three large candelabra and some family papers could be saved.

Solomon Miller, Jr.'s son, Harry married Hetley Leavenworth. He was best known for his active support of the Universalists. He donated the land on which the present Town Hall was built as a Universalist Church. Equally prominent was his brother, Elisha, Jr., who married Angeline Munson in 1826. Angeline's mother, Betsey, was famous in revolutionary Vermont as one of the "lost girls" of Eldad Taylor, who had been given up for lost after two nights and three days in the woods near Sunderland in southern Vermont in May of 1780, until they were found by a search party led by Ethan Allen. The Taylors moved to Williston in 1786 and

Dorothy Parker and her big sister, Laura, act out a skit.

Elisha Miller, Sr.'s, house at Cherry Hill on Route 2.

George Allen, left, and "Doc" Marvin out for a drive to the Islands.

Betsey married John Munson. Their daughter, Angeline, became Mrs. Elisha Miller, Jr. They built a plank house with boards cut at their own sawmill along Muddy Brook (members of the Miller family operated the sawmill until the 1850's.) But the homesite of the second home they built was always damp. In 1850, they moved the house to a knoll [now entirely removed] at the intersection of Route 2 and present-day Industrial Avenue, renamed it "Maple Hill" and remodelled it, putting a brick veneer outside and adding wings. The grounds at "Maple Hill" were renowned for their herb gardens. Angeline Munson Miller was not only a noted

Laura Parker Miller went overseas as a volunteer during World War I.

herbalist but a notorious practitioner of spiritualism who purportedly carried on seances with the dead including Abraham Lincoln. For many years, "Maple Hill" was a working dairy and produce farm, with a blacksmith, herds of hogs and a great ice house filled each year with ice from Shelburne Pond.

"Maple Hill" passed to Angeline, then to Elisha, Jr.'s son, Jackson, and then to Laura Parker Miller, who had three beautiful daughters. Laura Parker went overseas during World War I and operated a canteen at the warfront in France. Marion Parker Miller became the family historian. The hand-

Dorothy Parker Alling was a distinguished writer and benefactor of the town's library, named in her honor.

Marion Parker Marvin, a star student at Burlington High School, became the family historian.

"Doc" Marvin was long a well-known athlete and coach.

some brick homestead was finally the home of Dorothy Parker Alling, an accomplished writer after whom Williston's town library is named. In her will, she made provision to expand and endow the town library in her family's honor. "Maple Hill" was demolished in 1960 to make way for an industrial park.

3. The Brownells

It is no accident that much of what we know about the early history of Williston we know because of women. In a family such as the Brownells, for example, it is the women who have been at least as talented, intrepid and accomplished as the men—and more often, it was the women who wrote things down.

There have been Brownell men who have served as magistrates and state representatives and senators and Secretary of State of Vermont: scarcely has there been a generation in which a Brownell did not hold public office. There have been farmers and merchants and corporate executives and founders of banks and railways and utility companies, clergymen, lawyers and missionaries. But in this sprawling energetic Yankee family, it was often the women who were the educators and the scholars, the pioneers and the trailblazers. Most important for us, they were the ones who wrote things down.

The Brownells, men and women, have been rebels and creators, two things that often go hand in hand. The first Brownells who came to New England were fleeing religious persecution in England. They sailed to Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638. Thomas and Anne Bourne Brownell arrived at a time of turmoil in the Bay Colony. Anne Hutchinson, an outspoken and literate woman, was being persecuted by Puritan authorities for holding religious meetings in her home at which she criticized the clergy, who ruled both the church and the colonial government. Convicted, she was deported to Rhode Island. The Brownells soon followed her. Thomas

Brownell became a Rhode Island colonial official and left nine children when he fell from his horse and died.

The first Brownell to migrate to Vermont was also a radical revolting against intolerable authority. Less than one month after Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold and the Green Mountain Boys seized Fort Ticonderoga from the British at the outbreak of the American Revolution, the Continental Congress authorized Connecticut in June, 1775 to assume control of Lake Champlain and its forts. Ichabod Brownell of Canaan, Connecticut, marched north with the Ninth Company of the Fourth Connecticut Regiment. He served at Ticonderoga all that summer. As the Americans prepared their attack on Canada, Ichabod's unit was discharged. He hiked home and was mustered out that November. But he could not forget the splendid forests he had seen and the rivers and the rich soil around Lake Champlain. Connecticut was already overcrowded. It had more people per square mile than any other province. The soil in Litchfield County was poor and expensive.

Shortly after Vermont's admission to the United States assured clear title to land, Ichabod Brownell and his younger brother, Aaron, decided to move north to Vermont. They already knew the Allen Brothers, who also came from Litchfield County. Ethan Allen, the oldest, had been proselytizing the New Hampshire Grant for a dozen years. Ethan Allen had worked before the Revolution as a storekeeper in western Connecticut and then as active partner in the iron smelting and casting business of Forbes & Allen in Canaan, Connecticut, which was to make Revolutionary War cannon as well as, in peacetime, iron nails, something new in America. One of the Forbes brothers had a daughter, Zeruah. Young Samuel Aaron Brownell courted her.

In 1792, Ichabod, at age 42, came to settle in the Winooski River Valley. He came on foot and horseback up the narrow overland trail that the Allens had marked from Castleton to the Falls of the Winooski. They hauled all of

their belongings, or rather their oxen did. Settlers usually waited for winter to make such long-distance moves so the oxen could pull their sled loads of precious belongings. Ichabod soon bought a handsome stone house that still bears that name. The Old Stone House, at 73 East Allen Street in Winooski, Ichabod Brownell's long-ago tavern, is now the headquarters of the Winooski Historical Society.

From tavern-keeping and farming, he made a good enough living to devote some of his time to holding office in the new town of Colchester. Town meetings were held at his tavern and Ichabod both provided the drinks and served as a town selectman. Jurors summoned to court days at the Chittenden County court at Gideon King's Tavern on King Street in Burlington sometimes stayed at Brownell's Tavern in Colchester and dined on beef and mutton from Brownell's farm. The animals could roam free in those days but they bore Ichabod Brownell's distinctive earmarks: "a slit in the end of the right ear and a square crop off the left ear." And that was registered in the Colchester town records. According to the 1807 Colchester Grand List, Ichabod was one of only nine residents prosperous enough to be able to afford a watch. It was appraised at $5 (that's about $200 today). In those days, in a barter economy, few people had cash and fewer watches.

Younger brother Aaron also thrived. He worked at one of Ira Allen's two forges on Colchester Point and, when Ira departed for England and France to buy arms for a revolt that aborted, Aaron was elected to succeed him as Colchester Town Clerk. He held the post for thirteen years. Daytimes he sweated over the loads of iron ore brought across Lake Champlain to be smelted and poured and pounded into bar iron and mill iron and then formed into nails to build houses and hammers to pound them and he helped to make anchors for the ships that plied the lake.

The success of the first two Brownells to migrate to Vermont drew the third to the Winooski Valley in 1800. He was their nephew, Samuel Aaron. He was twenty-two and

ready to farm for himself when his father, Captain Edward Brownell, sent him up from Canaan, Connecticut, to Chittenden County with money to buy some prime farm land. By the year 1800, Vermont was considered some of the best farmland in the Union with the highest per acre yield of wheat in the nation. A young couple could buy 100 acres reasonably, clear the land and build a house and barn, sell timber they cut in the winter and use the scrapwood to cook down into potash. They sold the potash for hard cash on the export market. It was shipped off from Burlington to Montreal and then to England to make sulfuric acid for the textile industry and to make gunpowder and soap. In five years a hardworking young couple could pay off a mortgage and own its own home and prosper. Young Samuel Aaron no doubt stayed with his uncle at the stone house in Winooski while he found 206 choice acres in the northwestern corner of Williston for which he paid $250 of his father's money.

Samuel Aaron Brownell built this snug homestead on Mountain View Road in 1802. The porches were added by the Martel family in the late 1950's.

The farm where he lived was situated on what is now Mountain View Road between Redmond Road and Old Stage Road and now belongs to the Martel family. Back in Connecticut, his father deeded him one-half of the land. Samuel married his 19-year-old sweetheart, Zeruah Forbes, and brought her to Vermont. She rode to Williston on a pillion, a pillow-like cushion strapped behind Samuel's saddle. With her arms around her bridegroom like a couple riding a motorcycle today, she clung precariously for the long and tedious journey. A few years later, Samuel Aaron replaced their cabin with a clapboard frame house with a black walnut stairwell. (That house was sold to the Martel family in 1913. It was altered in the late 1960's and, again, after a fire in the 1980's.) Sam Brownell was followed to Williston by his father, at fifty-six already considered an old man in those days, and the whole family of six younger children plus the mother-in-law to spend the rest of their days working an adjoining farm.

Those first Vermont Brownells prospered and multiplied. Ichabod and Elizabeth had four daughters. The oldest, Ama, married William Munson. They built a large red brick farmhouse which still stands at Munson's Corners in Colchester at the intersection of Route 2 and 127. They had fourteen children. Their daughter, Clarissa, married Lemuel Platt. In the Civil War he was a colonel of the famed 1st Vermont Cavalry which rode off to Virginia on Morgan horses raised in Vermont. The fourth daughter of Ichabod and Elizabeth Brownell was Cynthia, who led a life that could not happen with today's modern communications.

Back in Connecticut, Cynthia Brownell was only seventeen when she married John Rowleson and her first baby was born. Their second child, Ichabod Brownell Rowleson, died in infancy. In 1802, her husband, John, joined the United States Navy during the Tripoli War and sailed to the Mediterranean, where he was taken prisoner when the *USS Philadelphia* was captured by Barbary pirates during the siege of Tripoli on October 13, 1803. When Rowleson was ran-

somed by the United States government three years later, he was mistakenly informed that his wife had died. In fact, Cynthia had moved up to Vermont with her children to her parent's house, the Stone Tavern. She believed her husband had died in captivity. John sailed to Philadelphia and eventually remarried. His second wife died after giving birth to three children. Two years after John's release from an Algerian forced labor camp, Cynthia, too, remarried in Vermont and gave birth to three more children. Twelve years later, the November 12, 1819 issue of the *Northern Sentinel* reported that Cynthia, now 47, was suing her second husband, who had fled to the wilds of Fairfax, for desertion. That same year, 1819, John Rowleson ventured up from Philadelphia with one of his sons to find out what had happened to his Vermont family. Local legend tells of the overjoyed reunion of John and Cynthia. They were married for the second time on January 17, 1820. After her first and third husband *really* died, Cynthia moved west to the new frontier town of Chicago to live with *her* twice-widowed daughter, Hannah. How different their lives would have been with telephones.

For sheer melodrama, however, Hannah, Cynthia's first-born daughter, may have surpassed her mother. She grew up in the Stone Tavern of her grandparents and in 1808 married John Barry, who was serving as the first constable of Burlington. Barry supposedly was the son of a British aristocrat who had gone out West to explore and never returned. Constable Barry volunteered to serve in the War of 1812, presumably as an officer, and he received a veteran's land grant in the Old Northwest which he never took up. Hannah and John Barry had four children by the time Barry died in 1819. The desperate Hannah, with four children under the age of ten and little prospect of remarrying, decided to go West to claim his veteran's land grant from the United States government. She took the three older children with her but, fearing her two-year-old, Almira, would not survive the thousand mile journey into the wilderness, left her with the Williston family of Smith Benham until she was old enough to send for.

Hannah and her older children, ages five, seven and nine, travelled somehow (there were still no canals or railroads) to Fort Dearborn, Illinois (now Chicago) in 1819. She found only four cabins outside the fort—and 5,000 Indians who had fought on the American side in the War of 1812 and who came to the fort periodically to claim their veteran's pensions. Hannah took up her federal land in the new town of Pullman and, like her grandparents, built a two-story tavern among tall oak trees. In addition to running an inn for travellers and a farm, she found the time to cultivate silk worms. She spun the silk herself and knitted it into fashionable stockings. Her mother, Cynthia Barry Rowleson Hill Rowleson, travelled west to join her twelve years later.

Most of what we know about their life out West survives only because another Brownell woman, Hannah's daughter, Almira, after growing up in Williston, went to visit her mother as a bride with her young bridegroom, distant cousin George Washington Brownell. He was the son of Samuel Aaron Brownell whom we last saw bringing his bride to Williston in 1802.

Almira, 19, had not seen her mother since she was two and had been left behind. She must have known great anxiety worrying about her mother and all those Indians on the frontier a thousand miles away. In her travel diary of her wedding trip, Almira recorded a story that could only have come from her mother:

> The Indians were usually peaceful but one who thwarted them had to take risks. One day [Hannah] had her son put sugar in a whiskey barrel and fill it with water [to make] vinegar. Just then, two Indians came in and, deceived by the smell, demanded firewater. [Hannah] shook her head vigorously refusing . . . One raised his tomahawk threateningly and advanced upon her. She had just [prepared] a pail of boiling hot water to mop the floor and instantly caught up her dripping mop to

Almira Brownell was left behind when her mother went West to claim her late husband's soldier's land grant but rejoined her after she married.

meet the charge. The savage turned and fled from the steaming weapon crying out "Good squaw! Good squaw!"

George Washington Brownell and Almira were married at the bride's adoptive home in Williston on August 25, 1836. The bridal party of twelve couples rode on horseback to a tavern in Richmond for their wedding supper. They began their journey to visit Hannah and her mother and children with a steamboat ride down Lake Champlain on October 4, 1836. Then they glided on a barge on the Hudson-Champlain Canal to Troy and then along the Erie Canal to Buffalo, and went on

George Washington Brownell and his bride, Almira, went West in the 1830's by steamboat and barge canal but returned in winter by sleigh.

by boat and stagecoach to Chicago. They spent two months in Chicago—the last time Almira saw her mother—and started for home in January of 1837 on a sleigh ride that lasted until March 4th. Wrapped in buffalo robes and with a buffalo laprobe covering their legs and feet, they crowded into their cutter (a sleigh) with room only for a single trunk containing a few books, including a Bible and *The Vicar of Wakefield.* The weather was crystal clear and all went well until they reached Detroit where the ice across the river was reported to be treacherous. A man had just drowned when he crashed through the ice with his horse and sleigh. But George Washington Brownell knew how to drive carefully on ice. He

navigated their cutter safely, passing close enough to the drowning site to see the man's coat frozen into the ice. The hardest part of the trip for the large chestnut which had drawn them all those weeks was the last six miles. There had been one of those typically long and heavy early March snowstorms in Vermont and the fences were covered and the road from Burlington to Williston was staked with cut bushes.

But the couple survived. They were married sixty-nine years. George bought a farm which he operated for forty years. Before the railroads were built, he bought cattle and sheep in Vermont and with his son, Charles, and a farmhand, herded them on trail drives all the way to the Boston stockyards. They stopped each night to enclose them at some farm along the road.

George's father also was doing well. Samuel Aaron Brownell had branched out. In addition to farming, he started a store across the river in Painesville, as Essex Junction was then called. There were scarcely five hundred people in the six-mile-square Town of Essex but Samuel saw an opportunity. He knew that folks from Williston would also cross the river. For the next forty years until North Williston had a store of its own the Brownell store in present-day Essex Junction flourished with trade from both sides of the river and as far away as Burlington. An agreement recently discovered in a Brownell basement shows that Sam Brownell by 1822 was supplying everything from rum and tobacco to sheep shears and silk to folks in Essex Junction but also to Philo Doolittle, who had a retail store in Burlington, in exchange for wheat and lumber Doolittle harvested from his lands in Williston.

An entry for April 18th, 1826, is fairly typical:

4 gals. new rum = $2.50
20 lbs. 8 penny nails = $1.80
25 lbs. 10 penny nails = $2.25
5 lbs. 20 penny nails = $.45

Born during the Revolutionary War, Samuel Aaron Brownell was the first of his family to settle in Williston.

Four days later Doolittle was back for more nails, for some screws, for a pound of coffee and some tobacco. In June, the season of weddings, Doolittle came to Brownell's country store to buy blue plates, ribbons, calico, tea, and cotton. He also ordered rope, files for sharpening the blades at nearby sawmills, satin shoes, raisins, shirting, socks and scythes—no wonder it was called a general store.

Branching out on both sides of the river, Samuel Brownell himself made another important purchase: the water rights to the Winooski River between Essex Junction and Williston. At first he operated a ferry. Then, fastening timbers with large links of iron chain drilled into rocks when the river water was low, he made the first of two dams at Hubbell's Falls where there is now the high Route 2A bridge. The Brownell family owned the dam and developed water power at the falls until 1912 when they sold it to Green Mountain Power Corporation, which built the present high dam in 1915. Samuel also branched out into the lumber business. He milled timber floated down the Winooski, using a multiple-blade saw now on exhibit at the Shelburne Museum. In partnership with Messrs. Burdick, Follett and Bradley of Burlington, he built rafts that carried lumber to Burlington for reshipment to Canada. About 1835 they began building boats that carried the lumber direct to Troy, New York, the timbering center of the United States at the time, so it could be milled and sent on to Albany and New York City. By 1843, the Vermont lumber trade died out. Lucius Chittenden attested that, as he came up Lake Champlain and looked at the Adirondacks, he could not see a tree trunk thicker in diameter than a broomstick. Vermont, too, had been strip-cleared not only for lumber but for precious potash, the price of which had shot up twelve fold between 1800 and 1815. Were there any trees left in Vermont by that time? That is another question.

Samuel Brownell's family kept pace with the growth of his business. He and Zeruah had eight children. Their fifth, Chauncey Wells Brownell, was to become the patriarch of the

Chauncey Brownell and his first wife, Laura Chapin Higbee.

Brownell clan in Vermont. Chauncey waited to marry until the unusual old age of 29. Already active in all his father Samuel's businesses, he worked hard at farming—he would

eventually amass five farms comprising 1,000 prime acres of Williston farmland—which he harvested with the help of one of McCormick's new horsedrawn mowing machines—and lumbering. Obviously literate, he had taught for awhile in a district school when he was young. Just before he married in 1841, he bought from the widow of Jotham Hall a 410-acre farm and handsome brick house, now 544 South Brownell Road in Williston, where he lived for the rest of his life. He had an interesting way of choosing his wife. With a party of friends he climbed Camels Hump and was impressed with the only girl who made it to the summit. She was Laura Chapin Higbee of Shelburne. Laura had attended Emma Willard's Female Academy in Troy, New York, and was more polished and better educated than Chauncey, who admired her erudition. Shortly after he bought his own farm, he courted Laura. They married and had five children in the next nine years. When a sixth child was about to be born, Laura Brownell began to hemorrhage. They sent their 10 1/2 year old son, Samuel Aaron, Jr., riding off to Burlington to fetch a doctor. But by the time Sam could return with the doctor, Laura was dead. The baby died, too. Chauncey had helped deliver all of their earlier children but this time he had been helpless.

It was a year and a half before he remarried, an unusually long time for those days for a widower with five children, but Chauncey had been devoted to Laura and was by nature cautious, even if you wouldn't know it. He chose as his second wife Martha Maeck Van Sicklen of South Burlington. Her grandfather had been, in 1790, the first male born in Burlington. Her father was Judge John Van Sicklen who lived on Hinesburg Road in a large brick house with four chimneys between Van Sicklen Road and Cheese Factory Road. Her brother Frederick became the second president of Howard Bank. By 1850, Chauncey Brownell was again riding over to his store in Essex Junction every working day as part of his

Chauncey Wells Brownell accumulated a fortune in land and business dealings and was a staunch abolitionist.

round of farms, sawmills and store. The Central Vermont railroad had just come to Williston and to Essex Junction. Chauncey snapped up the business of providing wooden shims of various thicknesses to wedge between the rails and the ties to level out the tracks. Vermonters found other uses for the scrap products of his sawmill. He sold them sawdust by the wagon load. You could pick up a load with your own wagon and team for 50¢ or he would have it delivered for 75¢. You could use it to pack around the ice you harvested from the river or the lake or a pond to make it last the summer in your icehouse. In winter, you could insulate your house with Chauncey's sawdust by setting boards a foot away from the outside walls and filling the space with sawdust. Chauncey's lumber mill also provided the planks, the walls and the underpinning for the covered bridge you traversed from Williston to his mill and store.

Chauncey Wells Brownell bought this house on South Brownell Road in 1840.

The large brick house on South Brownell Road—which became virtually a self-sufficient plantation—became known as "The Homestead" to generations of Brownells. Often it was crowded with farm workers as well as family members. For a while, Brownell went to New York City each year and hired newly-arrived Irish immigrants who usually worked for him for a year or two and saved up their wages before many of them migrated again, this time to take up homesteads of their own farther west. At the Brownell homestead in Williston they ate at a long harvest table in the kitchen. They slept in bunk beds in a warren of rooms off the vast kitchen. Many of the men slept in storage rooms lined with the fruits of their labor. There were canned goods of all kinds, fruits and vegetables and preserves, put up in the summer and early fall by Mistress Brownell, her daughters and "the help." The canning jars filled storage rooms with brick floors—except for the vegetable storage cellar, which had a dirt floor. There was a second cellar with a bolted, locked door and steps from the front hall: the wine cellar. Here, too, were stored baskets of farm-grown applies and, usually, a barrel or two of cider. Branching off from the main house was an annex where there was a large carpenter's work shop with a loft. In the shop was a carpenter's bench made of thick planks and massive log legs. Here the homestead's carpentry work was done. Beneath it were a smoke room where hams were cured and boiling room which opened directly onto the back kitchen yard and a cheese room with a cheese press and a huge tin vat known as the "big cheese tub." From the road, the house appears to be two stories high but on its western, or back, side, three stories are visible. The house was built into a hillside with an added level of rooms concealed from passersby by the brow of the hill. Another unique feature is the high portico with 22-inch pine floor planks.

In 1852, when the second Mrs. Brownell came to the Homestead, she persuaded her husband to make the interior lighter and brighter. All the 24-pane windows were carefully

taken out and replaced with larger, more cheerful panes. (Brownell gave the old panes to Lincoln Hall in Essex Junction where they still grace the top floor). The new Mrs. Brownell also had one partition separating a hallway from the parlor removed so that there were two large parlors on the first floor separated by high, wide oak doors that could be thrown open to accommodate large family gatherings. She also had several chimneys unblocked to provide large, attractive working fireplaces throughout the big brick house.

Mary Tracy Brownell, granddaughter of Chauncey Brownell and an avid family diarist, wrote to describe a Thanksgiving Day when family members gathered from Williston, Essex Junction and Burlington at the Homestead. "We went in sleighs, cutters and four-seaters, with sleighbells jingling, to Grandfather's house," she recorded.

> There was that breathtaking moment (which I have always felt) when we passed the high cedar hedge and turned quickly into the yard and saw the familiar rounded arches of the long porch. As a girl, I would say to myself, `Roman arches.' We counted the sleighs and speculated on who had already arrived. Then Grandfather came out and gave us a hearty greeting as he did each load, and gave directions for putting up the horses.

Inside the sprawling brick farmhouse, the children watched as Grandfather Brownell lifted the top of the soapstone stove and piled in the logs from the huge wood box. In this large dining room, the long table was "laden with food." Great-grandmother Van Sicklen

> was brought out from her room and seated beside Grandfather at the table and Grandmother seated at the other end of the table. Next, the huge chicken pie was placed before Grandmother and roast

turkey at the other end . . . A little roast pig was brought in—the first I'd ever seen.

After dinner, "Grandfather started off the games—Blind Man's Bluff and Start-and-Ketchum." There was "the most beautiful Christmas tree, probably cut from the side of the mountain [Brownell Mountain] decorated with candles, festoons of popcorn and molasses popcorn balls and gifts." Just back from graduate studies in Germany was recent Vassar graduate Laura Brownell: "I wonder if Aunt Laura helped string that popcorn." Santa Claus appeared in costume to distribute the gifts—"Grandfather, I think it was, and I felt quite grown up because I wasn't frightened." Mary's father, Sam, took a ribbing because he couldn't smoke his customary cigar during the distribution of the gifts. "Santa" took cigars from the tree and passed them to Sam one at a time. He had to read the inscriptions aloud.

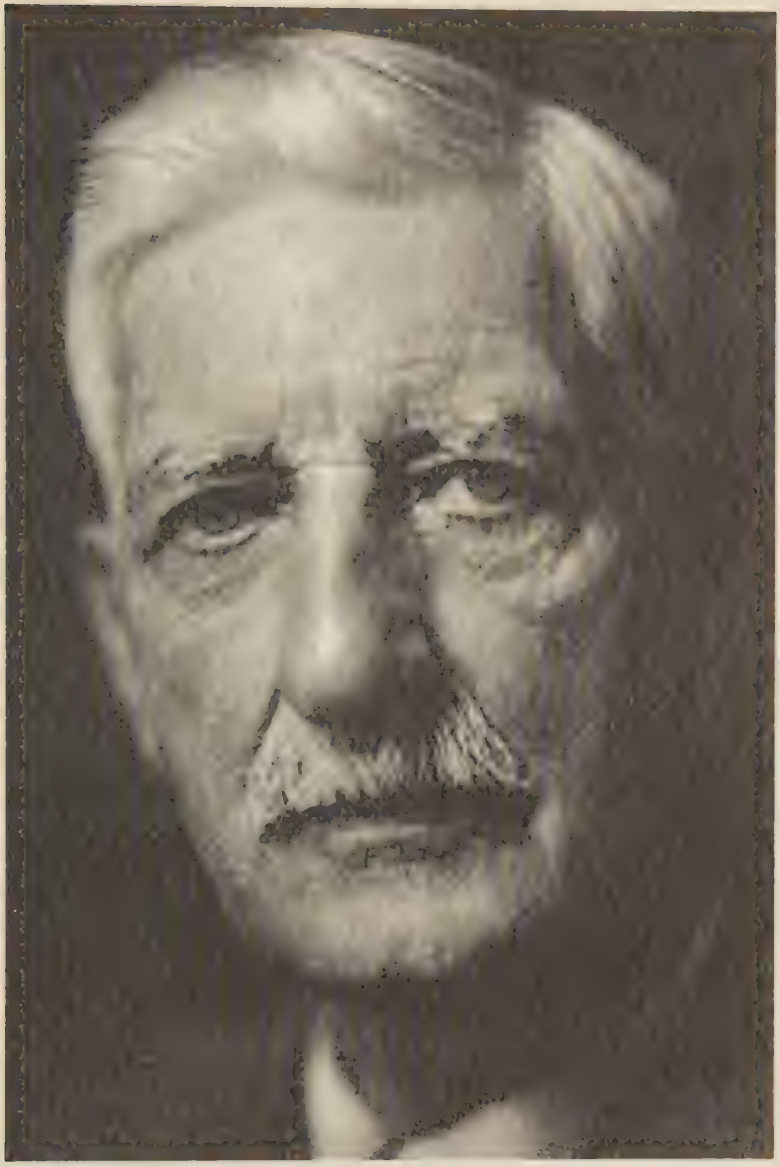
"One cigar was from Uncle Chan [Chauncey W. Brownell II]," Mary recorded, "and on it was the following rhyme as I remember it:

Down by the river under the hill
There stands, they say, a big saw mill;
Now, on the left, as you go down
Or on the right as you're coming to town,
Sam built for himself since autumn came
A wonderful structure, office by name,
He fitted it up most wondrously
With chairs and tables all made of pine,
And a bargain stove from a railroad car
To make all complete needs this one cigar.

Mary's grandfather, Chauncey Brownell, was described in one family history as a "hard driven man of abounding vitality, uncertain temper and a warm generous heart." An avid local politician, he was proud of eventually holding every

office Williston voters had in their gift "from fence viewer to state senator." Chauncey Brownell was certain about one thing. He could never stand the Democrats, whom Willistonians identified with the South and slavery. At first he was a Whig and then, when they came along in the mid-1850's, he joined Abraham Lincoln's Republicans on the eve of the Civil War. He was an active Abolitionist. While a friendly Democratic rival was installing a fifty-foot flagpole one day in the 1850's, Chauncey was driving by in his Morgan horse-drawn buggy and overheard a workman calling, "It's leaning a little to the South." Chauncey couldn't resist yelling at them, "So's your party!" When his son, Chauncey II, ran for Secretary of State of Vermont, the elder Chauncey, making his rounds, walked into his general store in Essex Junction the day after the election only to be told by lounging customers that Chauncey had been beaten. Chauncey nodded: "I told Mother, Chauncey's nuthin' but a suckin' baby!" After everyone had a hearty laugh, they told Chauncey that his son had actually won. "I told Mother," he nodded, "Chauncey'd get there!" Young Chauncey was three times re-elected Secretary of State, serving from 1890 to 1898. He was elected to the State Senate in 1902 and served as its president pro tem.

Chauncey Sr. was equally proud of his daughter, Laura. He believed that women should be well-educated. Like her brothers and sisters, she had been tutored at home but she was so bright that by age 13 the Town of Williston hired her as a teacher for one of its one-room district schoolhouses at Sucker Hollow. She attended Mrs. Wooster's boarding school in Burlington but when she was ready for college, the University of Vermont was not yet willing to admit women. Instead, in 1871, Laura travelled to Poughkeepsie, New York, to a new college for women named Vassar. Her maiden Aunt Lucy (Chauncey's older sister), never married and kept house for her parents in the original Brownell farmhouse on Mountain View Road. She sometimes helped Laura with



Chauncey Brownell II became Secretary of State of Vermont.

welcome cash gifts. Laura pored out her homesickness in letters back to her in Williston:

> [Vassar College], Feb. 25, 1872
>
> My dear Auntie,
>
> The wind is whistling drearily around, rattling the window sash in a way that isn't pleasant for it's too suggestive of cold weather . . . I am tired of reading and have been sitting here wishing I were at home . . . with friends who were in a mood for talking. I have written to Father but that wasn't very satisfactory . . . .
>
> Last Thursday we had a holiday. In the evening Miss Ferry held a reception and some of the students entertained us with reading and music. At nine o'clock we adjourned to the dining hall to eat cake and ice cream in honor of the Father of his Country. The evening before that our Lady Principal conceived the idiotic idea of interfering with one of our little plans for amusement. From this 5th Corridor there are ladders leading to the roof of the house. It was a clear, beautiful evening and a few of us climbed up, groping along in the dark till we came out into the cold moonlight. It was a wonderfully pretty scene that was spread out before us, and we were quite unprepared for the ominous words which were soon passed up, "Miss Terry wishes to see those young ladies who are on the roof." I was the first to appear before her majesty . . . .

One year, she could not get home over Christmas break and stayed on campus, one of forty who were snowbound while the rest of the 400 students made it home for Christmas. So she wrote letters to Mark Twain, Oliver Wendell Holmes and John Greenleaf Whittier, asking them to comment on Vassar's

Laura Chapin Higbee Brownell Collier, an early Vassar graduate, became a distinguished educator in New York City.

pioneering program of women's education. They all wrote back. Holmes took more than a year and then wrote a windy and condescending letter: Whittier wrote about his poem, "Snow Bound," and just who had inspired it: "a cultivated, accomplished young woman but wayward and ungoverned."

He evidently would remember Laura because it was he who decided whether she would later be published in the pages of *Atlantic Monthly*, which he edited. The third letter was from Mark Twain—who understood her plight:

Hartford, Conn., Jan. 2 [1873]

My Valued Friend—

Your very welcome favor of 10 days ago has just arrived, by the way of Boston.

I understand your situation; I understand it thoroughly. And I am full of sympathy for you too—commiseration is the stronger word. For I comprehend that "company" does not consist in a certain arbitrary number of people grouped together, nor "solitude" in a lack that can be set down in figures—but that the former consists in the number that a body is used to, and the latter in any prominent and noticeable reduction of that number. Now I can feel what a sense of loneliness must descend upon the heart when it finds itself forlorn and forsaken, with only forty friends to turn to for companionship when it has been used to the ministering love and sympathy of four hundred. Why, it is only one friend in the place of ten. It is offering a tallow candle to a worshipper of the sun. It is the pith and marrow of solitude, it is desolation complete.

But circumstances do so alter cases. Five people are ample company in my house; forty would bewilder me; with four hundred "I would not live alway"—I doubt if I would even survive half of that time.

But cheer up! Economize your forty; get such comfort out of them as you can; live not in the present, but in the future; dream of the time when the

four hundred will be restored and the aching solitude of today be but a troubled memory.

Now I am forgetting that this sermon, which might have saved you, is going to arrive too late. By the time it reaches you your little family circle will be harmoniously rounded and complete again, and the peaceful murmur of 400 tongues be soothing your sorrows to sleep. If you had only thought to telegraph, I would have said all the cheerful things for the 40 lovely Crusoes, and said them in time, too.

Yrs Very Truly
Saml L. Clemens

Among the first women admitted to Phi Beta Kappa, the national honor society, Laura was graduated from Vassar in 1874. She went to Germany for graduate studies, and she taught German and philosophy when she returned. A leader in women's education all of her life, she also was active in the nation's oldest social service organization, the Brooklyn Bureau of Community Service. She helped to found the Brooklyn Public Library. She contributed articles and poetry to the *Atlantic Monthly*. For nearly 20 years she taught at the Packer Institute in Brooklyn—and came home to Vermont every summer. And whenever she travelled to Europe she brought back presents for her favorite niece, Mary Tracy Brownell.

By the year 1870, many of the Brownell interests straddled several Chittenden County town lines. Laura's brother, Samuel II, moved to Essex Junction with his bride to live for the rest of his life. Samuel II had attended a school in Canaan, Connecticut, run by his great-uncle, the Reverend Grove Brownell, an 1813 graduate of the University of Vermont, and then had clerked in his father Chauncey's store in Essex Junction. Sam journeyed to Titusville, Pennsylvania

Samuel Aaron Brownell became an early advocate of electric service in Vermont and operated businesses on both sides of the Winooski River.

in 1859 when oil was first discovered there. He had saved up $200 and spent it all in a vain attempt to strike it rich. He apparently decided it would be impolitic to ask his father for help, so he worked in a store there to earn the train fare home, and for the rest of his life worked hard at slightly more con-

servative investments. He married Eliza Tracy of Shelburne who made her wedding dress on a new-fangled machine—a sewing machine. He launched a construction business and built his own home first. But Samuel Brownell II never lost his yen for innovations. In 1893 he went to the Chicago World's Fair. He spent most of his time in the electricity pavilion. He brought back an electric toaster—and a bright idea. He and brother Chauncey II soon bought the dam and river rights from their father, and bought a large turbine engine and built the first municipal hydroelectric plant in Vermont. There were no electric meters, only a monthly rate for subscribers.

By the time the Brownells sold their power plant to Green Mountain Power Corporation in 1912, the plant produced 3,000 horsepower which operated a sawmill, a butter tub factory in North Williston and People's Electric Lighting Station. (It was not until 1921 that the Town of Williston introduced electricity to illuminate the two covered bridges over the Winooski River and signal lights at the Central Vermont Railroad crossings.)

Always eager for the latest inventions, he bought one of the first radios. It had earphones and cost a staggering $100—and on it he heard the first news report of Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic.

The spirit of adventure of the Brownell family led many of them to visit the latest frontiers. By the late 1870's, that already meant the Pacific. Lucy Adelia Brownell was the daughter of Almira, who had gone on that long-ago wedding trip to the Illinois frontier to see her mother. She journeyed to Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1879 when the Islands were still a kingdom ruled by the Kamehameha royal family. She taught school, painted, and made adventuresome trips to the out islands—then wrote to Almira in Williston that she was "still alive." In July, 1879, she climbed the slopes of an active volcano on the Big Island:

> The crater is over three miles long and two or three wide—we reached it by going down several hundred feet and perhaps thousands I don't know, it seemed thousands before we got up again. When we get to the foot of the mountain we strike lava . . . A good deal of sulphur is in it and smells very strongly . . . After traveling about two miles over the lava often crossing cracks in it where we could see the fire, when we reached the lake we stood on the brink some thirty feet above it and looked down into it . . . . It looked like molten iron . . . .

Later signing on as governess for a wealthy Mexican family, Adelia Brownell had just explored the ruins of Mazatlan and was on her way by United States mail steamer to San Francisco when the great earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed the city. She had been hoisted from an open boat in rough seas onto the vessel sitting on a bag of coffee beans. To her 89-year-old mother back in Williston she wrote:

> As soon as my feet struck the deck I was met by the captain and officers who congratulated me on my courage. The passengers crowded around me asking all kinds of questions. Wasn't I afraid? Where was my husband? Then came a steward with a cup of tea. With my clothes soaking wet, my hair all down and myself all to pieces generally, I did feel the need of it.

It rained for ten days after the earthquake and she could feel the aftershocks as far south as Mazatlan where Adelia reported that "one hundred houses fell in the city in one night." When the ceiling of her room in a boarding house collapsed under the weight of the water, Adelia and two Mexicans sat up all night on a bed "holding umbrellas over us

until morning." Eventually, Adelia, who never married, came back to Williston, where she lived until 1926, dying at age 87.

Over the years, Williston was to become not only home but home base for the farflung family. Shortly before he was elected Vermont Secretary of State for the first time, Chauncey W. Brownell II and his wife, Elva, had a fourth child born, Henry Chase Brownell. A 1908 UVM graduate, one of the first Rhodes scholars from the United States admitted to Oxford, Henry crossed the Pacific in 1908 and taught in Canton, China, where he was professor of history at the then Lingnan University until the Chinese Communists expelled all American faculty members in 1951 and turned the campus into the Kuangtung Provincial University. During World War II, he and his wife and teenage daughter were imprisoned by the Japanese for six months in Hong Kong until they were exchanged and shipped around Africa to the United States and home to Burlington. They returned to Lingnan after the war. Every five years the family came home and lived with his father. After their final expulsion, they came home to Vermont and lived nearly twenty more years.

One of his five children, Lincoln, was born in Canton shortly after Henry Brownell joined the faculty. An Army Air Corps pilot at the outbreak of World War II, he served as Assistant U. S. Military Attache for Air in Chungking. After years as a Wall Street lawyer, he and his wife, Mary Hester, moved to Vietnam where he was an importer until the fall of Saigon in 1975. But he was already preparing to retire to Williston, where he built a home on the mountain named after his family—the mountain where, more than a century ago, the Brownells cut the tree each year that was the heart of Christmas at their homestead. One other family circle seems to be closing: Lincoln's son, Peter, has held a series of public offices, first as Burlington City Councilman, then as Mayor, and at this printing, is County Senator, the third in his family elected to that office.

4. The Whitneys

The Whitneys were among the second generation of Williston settlers—and they came after attempting to put down roots in other Vermont towns—but by the late Nineteenth Century they were among the town's leading families. Otis Whitney left Conway, Massachusetts, in 1803 just after his father was killed by a falling tree. He migrated to Waterbury, Vermont, where he met and married Sarah Edmunds, the daughter of a Revolutionary War privateer. After nine years in Waterbury, Otis, Sarah and their three children moved to Jericho in 1812 and then to Williston in 1814, where they had four more children.

Chasing the family cat atop Whitney Hill in winter.

Riding a traverse sled down Whitney Hill at the turn of the century.

Their son, Edmund, was born on November 5, 1818, and educated at Williston Academy. There he was the pupil of the Reverend William Arthur, who came to Williston largely through Otis Whitney's influence. Rev. Arthur had the reputation of being not only a great teacher but an eloquent preacher with Irish wit. He taught in Williston for a little less than two years before moving to Hinesburg. No doubt Edmund Whitney knew the teacher's son, Chester, who became President of the United States when James A. Garfield was assassinated. Edmund Whitney became a farmer, was an early Abolitionist and member of the

Zeruah Forbes Brownell Whitney.

Republican Party and, after the dissolution of the Baptist Church supported and attended but never formally joined the Congregational Church. Edmund married Esther Flagg in 1839, who bore five children. She died in 1862 about the time her son, William, joined the Union Army and went off to fight at Gettysburg. Her oldest son, Henry, went to the West as a

The children of William and Zeruah Whitney endure a family photo session.

missionary and died in Elko, Nevada. Edmund Whitney remarried in 1866 and remained active in Williston town government, becoming town auditor at age sixty-eight. His older brother, Leonard, for many years served as headmaster of the Academy. Lucius Chittenden, in an 1876 letter to the town fathers, described "the Williston Academy, its unpainted

William Whitney a decade after the Civil War.

William Whitney at the time of his regiment's fortieth reunion.

exterior browned by exposure, its square painted belfry and bell, the tone of which I should recognize today . . . . Here Leonard Whitney reigned with autocratic rule."

The Whitney farm passed to Edmund's second son, William, who raised a family on Whitney Hill and had three children, Henry, Charles and Laura. (Charles for many years was a professor of medicine at the University of Vermont.) That farm became popular for winter sledding by traverse (see illustration) and remained in the Whitney family until 1906. After the farmhouse burned, Henry Whitney sold the place to Frank L. Curtis for $2,000. The farm passed through several owners' hands until, in 1990, Ray Pecor sold it to the town as the site for affordable housing for Williston's elderly. Whitney Hill Homestead now stands near the spot where so many aged Williston citizens had found shelter in the Whitney family home over the years. The new Homestead, built across the road and up the hill from Otis Whitney's original brick house, was rebuilt to resemble the handsome Whitney Hill farmstead of the 1840's.

5. The Burnetts of Cherry Hill

Sitting back from Route 2 some half-mile west of the Village is a lovely old white house (on your left as you head toward Burlington) called Cherry Hill. In 1869, William Burnett paid $8,000 in inflated post-Civil War currency to buy the farm from Thomas Metcalf. Burnett raised livestock and extended the fruit orchards, thus the name Cherry Hill. Burnett also understood road-and-bridge building and built many of Williston's bridges which lasted until they had to be rebuilt in the 1920's to suit the automobile.

One of Burnett's additions at Cherry Hill was a dam he built to make ice to store milk from his large herd of cows. The self-taught engineer designed and constructed a stone-and-earth dam that blocked a stream and created a two-acre pond, one of many that dotted Williston's farmscapes at the turn of the Twentieth Century. He calculated that he needed

two-and-one-half tons of ice for the milk from each cow. In the winter, he and his teams of workmen sawed the ice and dragged it into an icehouse. Burnett harvested enough ice to fill the needs of cash-paying neighbors and his dam lasted sixty-years. Winter and summer, the pond also was a favorite gathering place for the Village skaters and swimmers.

When Burnett retired in 1910, he turned the farm and gardens over to his sister, Jennie. In the spring of 1911, Jennie Burnett was joined by her cousin, Winnie Learned, from Braintree, Massachusetts. Both of these capable women had for many years looked after elderly parents or other relatives. Miss Learned had become an orphan at the age of three years and was brought up by an uncle and aunt.

In the spring of 1911 structural changes were commenced on the house, with Henry Leete of Williston in charge. In order to better the bedroom, Jennie decided to raise the roof. The framework of the entire house was sawn apart and with jacks the roof was lifted four feet. The operation cost Jennie $1,400. Miss Learned paid to bring running water into the house and into the barns for the cows. Pipes were laid to a spring up on the hillside. A never-failing water supply was the result.

As a small child, Jennie had wished to become a physician but this would have required a university education. One day she overheard her mother and an old doctor talking on the topic of education for girls. Both agreed that women were intended by nature to carry on the human race and that the simple R's were education enough. Jennie decided that "if she could not have the education she wanted she would try to make the most of what she had but that she would not marry until she found someone with whom she wished to live." It never happened.

Jennie Burnett was a successful farmer, one of the first to cut her hay early and get a second crop. She was one of the first local farmers to undertake milk production. With the usual mixed farming she combined fruit and gardens and

poultry. Later her flower garden was to become her longest-lasting legacy. The two women developed their flower sales and supplied cut flowers for the Burlington market. Jennie planned the garden and was the business woman. Winnie was good at sales. Dressed in antique clothes she drove a Model T Ford piled high with bundles and baskets of blooms of many kinds. She continued to drive this same Model T from the day she bought it in 1914 until shortly before her death in the 1940's.

Growing and handling the flowers created employment for many people, summer holiday work for the young and some occupation for the old. Every penny of profit from the flowers went to charity. Sometimes it was a ton of coal for some needy widow or aid for students to the University of Vermont or to local institutions needing funds to help the poor. "Cherry Hill was always a home for any old person needing shelter," said Delbert Mead Burnett, "and many such were taken in from time to time. Not only the elderly but young children as well lived there happily for a time and were influenced by the peace and harmony of that lovely place."

6. The Talcotts

When the Governor of Vermont, the lieutenant governor, three ex-governors, a score of National Guard officers, several judges, clergy and other distinguished guests left the dedication ceremonies for the new monument to the first governor, Thomas Chittenden, in August, 1896, they drove over in a cavalcade of carriages to Lewis Holt Talcott's house for dinner.

What was it about Talcott that could explain his claim on so many dignitaries? For one thing, he had a large enough house to accommodate them. Today, it is the home of Judge Alden and Phoebe Bryan. But a century ago, it was known for other reasons. For one thing, the Talcott farm was the largest dairy farm in the dairy state of Vermont. Moreover, the Talcotts were among the earliest settlers of Williston.

The Talcott farmhouse, surrounded by Williston Golf Club on North Williston Road, is now the home of Judge Alden and Phoebe Bryan.

Viewed here from the south, the Talcott house was the centerpiece of Vermont's largest dairy farm in 1896 when the state's leaders gathered here for dinner after dedicating a monument to Thomas Chittenden.

Deacon David Talcott was a close friend of Governor Chittenden. Born in Connecticut in 1740, he had come to Williston in the mid-1780's with his wife, Elizabeth, five sons and two daughters. They settled on the hill that now bears their name, building a large frame house at its summit. There, Deacon Talcott opened the first tavern in Williston, which he operated for twenty-five years until his death in 1810. The area became known as Talcottville. All of the Talcotts were farmers. Deacon Talcott was chosen as one of the first selectmen in 1786. One son, David, Jr., operated a tannery: he built the first house in the village proper. His son, Roswell, Deacon Talcott's grandson, saw to it that all of his five children were educated at Williston Academy. One of them, Jerusha, was for many years a teacher in Williston's district schools and at the academy. For four years, she held the office of town superintendent of schools (see Chapter Four).

Her brother, Lewis, after completing his schooling, stayed on his father's farm until he turned twenty-one. In 1862, at a time when many Williston youths were marching off to fight in the Civil War, he left for San Francisco, California, where he set up a dairy farm. At the war's end, he returned to Williston and started a large dairy farm on the old Root farmstead on the north side of town. At first, he had twenty-two cows but he steadily increased his herd until, by 1876, he had to buy a much larger farm, the old Daniel Fay farm. When a large new cheese factory opened on the original Talcott farm, he managed it as well.

In the summer months, he took the milk from his cows and many of his neighbors and produced either cheese or butter. By 1885, he had the largest dairy farm in Vermont: that year and again in 1886, he produced 150,000 pounds of cheese and 16,000 pounds of butter from the milk of 700 of Williston's cows. By 1890, his dairy produced 250,000 pounds of cheese a year. At this time, he owned 300 milk cows and a herd of young cattle and had about thirty horses grazing on his two thousand acres. With his successful business as a base, he

had become a leading Republican in the state, first elected as Williston's representative to the General Assembly in 1872. He twice served as a town selectman.

7. The Ishams

On June 23, 1871, Jarius David Isham purchased the Hiram Murray homestead on Oak Hill Road. Among Williston's first settlers, the Murrays had come to Williston in 1788, buying considerable acreage from Governor and Mrs. Thomas Chittenden. Now, Charlotte Murray was selling up: she sold her interest in the farm as did Truman and Laura Narramore.

Jarius Isham, who paid a hefty $10,000 for the 125 or so acres of the Murray farm, already owned forty acres to the northeast that he had purchased in 1860. By buying the Murray homestead, he had assembled one of Williston's best farms. It has been deeded down through the Isham family ever since: to son Homer in 1899, grandson George in 1940 and great-grandson David in 1965.

The house, like the rest of the farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was built by George W. Whitney for his daughter, Charlotte, when she married Hiram Murray. It was Charlotte who sold the place to the Ishams. The young couple lived in the horse barn (now used for cars) while the house was built. The barn was so large that it had to be made in three sections and then joined together. When Hiram Murray died in 1867, Charlotte sold her land to the Narramores and kept the house.

The first of the Ishams who later operated the farm was born on it after the turn of this century. George C. Isham attended the Lake Iroquois district school, then studied at Williston Academy before transferring to Burlington High School for three years and graduating from Montpelier Seminary. He worked as a clerk in 1923-24 in Forville's village store. He had one sister, Marion. When George was eleven, his father bought his first car, a 1914 Flanders with

Alfred W. Isham survived Gettysburg to assemble one of Williston's most prosperous farms, now in its fourth generation.

brass headlamps. Later, George was allowed to drive his father's Overland to the Universalist Hall (now the Town Hall) in the village for "fun nights" or for sleigh rides or ice skating.

For a few years, Homer Isham rented out this farm to Walter Osborne and tried living in the Village in another house he owned. Young George went back to the family farm frequently to visit the Osborne's daughter, Bessie, and her friends. It was there he met Sylvia Wellinger. Sylvia was a first-generation Willistonian. Her parents had immigrated from Germany around 1900. She had moved to St. George when she was very young and had four sisters and a brother, Lawrence, who used to play his fiddle for the square dances. Sylvia attended the little red schoolhouse in St. George and later worked as a telephone operator in North Williston in the telephone company building across the railroad tracks from Smith Wrights' cold storage plant. They were married in 1925 when George was twenty-two. At that time, the young couple took over operating the Isham farm, sharing the house with George's parents.

One source of pride of the Ishams was always their apple orchard. South of the house, it was so dense they could walk from tree to tree without touching the ground. The apples, pressed into cider or fermented into vinegar, provided a reliable cash crop. The Ishams filled their wagon with apples and empty jugs and took them down to Bradley's cider press. The Isham farm in those days included a small herd of cattle, about thirty laying hens and a few pigs. Their large garden produced potatoes which they sold or bartered for sugar or flour or other staple goods. They also cured their own hams in the smokehouse behind the house. In addition to the large barn they built a smaller building for the pigs and chickens and a small granary. There was another and larger barn for the heifers and the hay and two silos. Gradually, these buildings were replaced by two new silos, a heifer barn and large storage shed. Two wings were added to the main barn.

Daniel Martel sits at the wheel of the tractor as his brothers Tony, Paul and Philippe rest from bringing in the hay on their Mountain View Road farm in the late 1920's

Eugene and Josephine Martel bought their Mountain View Road farm in 1913.

Paul Martel, born in 1899, farmed in Williston until 1936.

Posing for a family portrait at a 1947 wedding, the large Martel family, one of many French-Canadian families who came to Williston during the Civil War and prospered. At left rear is Marguerite Isaras Martel, mother of the bride; among her sisters, Sister Marie de Fourniere; with arms crossed, Jerome, now the developer of Martel Mountain; to his right, with cigarette in hand is brother Ernest, who took over the family farm in 1936.

The Martel farmhouse as it appeared in the mid-1920's.

During the Depression, as family historian Ginger Isham wrote in the *Williston Historical Society Newsletter*,

> the Ishams raised all of their own food and had very little money. In those years, they played cards frequently with friends in the neighborhood and visited back and forth. Sylvia sewed for the family and made quilts.

The Ishams earned a reputation for civic generosity. Jarius Isham gave land from his farm for the Lake Iroquois District School and when the school needed to be enlarged, his son Homer gave more land.

George and Sylvia had thirteen children. Most of them lived out their lives in Williston. Jarius Isham's great-grandson, David, who has operated the farm for more than thirty years, and his wife, Ginger, have six children. Ginger has been a driving force in the Williston Historical Society and in the Committee for Responsible Growth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Williston's Changing Faces

Just as transportation had made Williston a farming and industrial center in the Nineteenth Century, transportation forever altered the town's sleepy rural appearance after 1950. The rate of change raced through the Twentieth Century accelerating with each decade.

The "Roaring Twenties," a decade of rapidly growing national prosperity, had neither roared nor were especially prosperous in Williston. In this rural Vermont farming community there wasn't the ballyhoo or the revolution in manners and morals that there was in areas where new technology made an impact on peoples' lives.

Williston's farmers did not enjoy the increased affluence of towns and cities where there was a greater degree of commerce. In 1919, in the wake of World War I prosperity, the Grand List was $8,791.88; by 1930, even before the effects of the Depression set in, it had actually slipped slightly to $7,703.

While the production of milk and its products, the main cash crops in Williston, rose nationally by a third between 1919 and 1926, the price of dairy products locally for the most

part remained low, only rising belatedly from $2.50 per hundred pounds of milk in the summer of 1928 to $3 by the end of the decade. This left a little money for frills such as a new radio or a Model T Ford (which sold for $300 that year). But after the Crash of 1929, any money for "extras" dried up as the price of milk plummeted, cut in half to $1.50 a hundred pounds by 1930.

Nationally, one reaction to hard times was a movement of people to the cities: in Williston, the opposite was true. Williston had been losing population steadily since 1900 (1,176). In 1910 it dropped to 1,000; in 1920, it hit an all-time low of 929 people. But people came back to the farms of Williston during the Great Depression. In 1930, 961 residents were reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. From that point on, population began to climb.

The greatest change in Williston in the Twentieth Century was created by the advent of the automobile. While many Williston residents owned cars before the 1920's, the first road to be paved in town was Route 2, which remained a dirt road until 1928 when it was paved with cement. Since most roads were still built for horse-drawn wagons and carriages and there was no town equipment for snow removal or road plowing, people put away their cars in the winter. Owners often took off the tires, took them indoors and wrapped them in paper to preserve them. Though cars could still be depended upon for warm, dry weather—they were as useless in mud season as in winter—Willistonians kept their horses, sleighs and carriages.

One change in transportation in Williston in the transitional Twenties was the shift from horse-drawn livery services to bus service. By 1923, Vermonters had to register their buses with the state Department of Public Service. From 1919, Willistonians rode Mrs. Myrtle Carrier's Richmond-based "bus" from their homes to neighboring communities. Actually, the vehicle was a black seven-passenger Cadillac; and, in 1923, Mrs. Currier received a state franchise. Two

Electrification preceded the paving of Williston Road by several years in the 1920's. Sidewalks and footbridges had already been built by philanthropist Henry Root, who helped invent the cable car.

other services, Fullers' and Jewitts', added conveyances to Burlington as the Twenties rolled on. Mr. Fuller sold his Waterbury farm in 1922 to buy his seven-passenger Cadillac with service from his home through Williston into Burlington. Later, he built a larger body for the Cadillac and renamed it the Yellow Bus Line. In 1930, he sold it to Vermont Transit.

To accommodate the new breed of tourists "from away" who climbed into their automobiles to go sightseeing and "leaf-peeping" in Vermont, Blossom Goodrich was probably the first in the 1920's to build tourist cabins on the flats east of French Hill. The Goodriches also served hot meals in their farmhouse to tourists. By the 1930's, the Nault and the Miles families also built tourist cabins. As the Twenties brought more cars, their owners bought gas at Forville's (now Williston Quik-Stop), Phelps' (now O'Brien's), the Old Brick Store (later Lyons' apartments) and at Browns' in North Williston. There were three companies with gas pumps on the 1929

Dr. Daniels' Famous Liniment

(Oster-Cocus Oil)

FOR FAMILY USE

BLOTS OUT PAIN ANY KIND ANYWHERE

Removes Bunches and Swellings, Relieves Pains and Aches in Bone, Nerve and Muscles. To be used for Sprains, Strains, Stiff and Sore Joints, Sore Throat, Sore Cords, Sore Feet, Sore Muscles, Aching Bones, RHEUMATISM and NEURALGIA, Cold in the Head, Pain in the Side, Back and Abdomen—and is the

BEST LINIMENT ON EARTH

DANIELS' LINIMENT is made just for a Liniment, don't drink it, don't use it internally, don't use it as a perfume, just use it for a liniment and wherever a liniment should be used, and you will be using the best liniment you can get. Remember, we state positively for all-round use, either for man or beast, there is no liniment as good as Daniels' or like Daniels' and you have no reason or excuse for using any but Daniels' Oster-Cocus Liniment.

FOR STRAINS AND SPRAINS.—Apply Oster-Cocus freely, but do not bandage while inflammation lasts. When you are able to walk about, after having a sprained ankle, use the Oster-Cocus morning and night for a few days. It will strengthen the ankle and obviate all tendency to weak joints.

RHEUMATISM (Sciatica).—Apply freely Oster-Cocus. Rub briskly and bandage with flannel wet with Oster-Cocus; a dry cloth over that; keep the bandage on as long as possible.

RHEUMATISM (Inflammatory).—Steam for twenty minutes in hot water, then apply Oster-Cocus Liniment freely; do not rub hard. Use every hour on the inflamed parts until relieved; do not bandage.

NEURALGIA.—Steam for twenty minutes in hot water. Rub briskly the sore place with Oster-Cocus, holding on a cloth saturated with Oster-Cocus for a few minutes. Do not bandage, but repeat until relieved.

SORE THROAT.—Wet a soft cloth with Oster-Cocus and bind around the throat, covering with a dry flannel. This will cure sore throat in a night. Remove the bandage before it blisters.

SORE FEET that become blistered and sore from constant standing or moving should be treated as follows: On retiring, bathe the feet in solution of Carbo-Negus (teaspoonful to a quart of water), dry thoroughly and apply Oster-Cocus freely, but do not rub. Any one who suffers with sore feet will be astonished.

STIFF JOINTS AND DEEP-SEATED LAMENESS.—Bathe for twenty minutes in hot water, hot as you can bear it, then rub on freely Oster-Cocus Liniment; bandage with a cloth wet in Oster-Cocus, put a dry one over that, and remove the bandage if it becomes too hot for comfort.

LAME BACK, PAINS IN CHEST OR ABDOMEN.—Bathe the sore spot in hot water; apply Oster-Cocus freely to the affected parts, covering with cloths until relieved or as long as you can stand it. Do not use the liniment where there is hair, as it will blister.

ATHLETES can find nothing equal to *Oster-Cocus* for strengthening the muscles, nerves and cords after all exertions or exercise. One rub-down with this Liniment will prove its worth to you. *Oster-Cocus* is compounded upon scientific principles, and is not a "patent" remedy.

Farmers in Williston appreciated nostrums that have long since disappeared, such as this linament advertised for sale in Warren's and Lyons' general stores in the 1920's.

Grand List, but R. E. Brown was still operating his blacksmith and wheelwright shop for the needs of horse-drawn transportation.

One facet of the new technology of the Twenties affected nearly everyone: the radio. Willistonians listened with two or three pairs of earphones to broadcasts of entertainment, sport events, news and advertising. Antennas began to sprout atop Williston's houses to improve the signals. Oldtimers remember getting only one station, this one from Schenectady, that one from Chicago.

Many households in Williston had to rely on battery-powered radios until the 1930's or even 1940's, when they got electricity lines run into their houses. In 1918, the first electric power was brought into town by the Wrights and Frank Talcott, who bought poles and wires and ran a line from a transformer in North Williston along the river road to Governor Chittenden Road and up North Williston Road. Soon afterward, they ran a line to the Village and a short way along Route 2. Not until after 1930 did many Williston folks benefit from electric power and its conveniences when Green Mountain Power made it generally available. Finally, by 1940, the Rural Electrification Administration made sure that electric power reached everyone.

The introduction of the telephone brought Willistonians closer together and brought joy to the face of Marion Parker Marvin in this strip of photos taken by her father, circa 1910.

The Brownell dam at Hubbell's Falls was replaced in 1914 by this Green Mountain Power Co. dam, which provided electricity for the region.

Until electricity was available for refrigeration, Williston residents had to remain resourceful, using iceboxes and cakes of ice. People along Mountain View Road got their ice in North Williston where it was taken after it was cut out of Chapman's Pond. Those who still lacked iceboxes dropped a bucket filled with bottles of milk and chunks of butter into their wells as their grandparents had. Farmers from the southern part of town who needed to keep their milk chilled hauled it to Mud Pond or Lake Iroquois, then still called Hinesburg Pond. George and Sylvia Isham told Williston historian Ruth Painter in a 1984 interview that the best months for ice harvesting were January and February when the ten-foot-deep ponds froze down twenty-four inches. After a snowstorm, farmers worked together to cut the ice. On average, farmers cut some four hundred cakes and covered them with sawdust in their icehouses. By 1940, when electricity reached every house in Williston, refrigerators replaced the blocks of ice.

The post-World War I revolution in morals and mores was slow to reach Williston, where there were no speakeasies and where the first time anyone was seen smoking a cigarette

in public was duly noted: it was a veteran who came home from the trenches of Europe with this new and noticeable habit. While cigarette production doubled nationally between 1918 and 1928, pipe-smoking remained the habit of choice on the front porches and in the parlors of Williston.

Such behavior as cigarette-smoking was often learned from the movies in the Twenties, but Williston had no movie house. A determined movie-goer had to ride over to Essex Junction on Saturday nights or, if he were a pupil at Burlington High School, stay after school for the matinees.

Most recreation still revolved around home and church. Card parties were popular among adults, especially at the Universalist Church (which was subsequently the Grange Hall): the most popular game was "500." With summer came

Numerous large ponds dotted Williston in the 1920's, producing large quantities of ice for refrigeration in winter and ideal conditions for "skinny dipping" on hot summer days.

medicine shows, glass blowers, travelling circuses with noonday parades to advertise them, fire-and-brimstone preaching evangelists and their revival meetings. There were still the popular Chautauqua shows and locally-produced minstrel shows with homegrown talent in blackface. Whole families attended kitchen "tunks," square dances held in a large farmhouse kitchen. As the adults pushed aside the furniture and danced, the children perched on the stairs and learned the moves, the calls and the music.

While men's and women's clubs flourished nationwide in the Twenties, few groups were organized in Williston. Oak Hill school teacher Irene Austin Miles organized the Good Will Club in 1921; the King's Daughters, founded in 1891, continued to meet. At the only church still surviving, the Williston Federated Church, there was a mid-week prayer group. In 1925, half a dozen organized the forerunner of the Williston Country Club by renting a few acres from Frank Talcott for a five hole golf course off North Williston Road.

Except for creation of a town library in 1920, there were few changes in Williston until the 1950's. The construction of Interstate Highway 89, begun in 1952, linked northwest and southeastern Vermont, but it sliced Williston in two, dividing it north and south, cutting farms in half and concentrating growth in the northern and western sections of the township.

One immediate effect of the opening of I-89 was to attract International Business Machines' microchip factory to the region. Eventually acquiring property on both sides of the Winooski River, IBM built three large buildings in Williston. Of equal impact, IBM workers began to buy and build houses in Williston in considerable numbers, contributing to a doubling of population between 1960 and 1970. At the same time, new businesses and light industry located in the Muddy Brook sector close to the burgeoning Burlington International Airport.

As western Williston began to resemble a suburb of Burlington, the new increased tax base contributed to growth of another kind. The destruction of the Williston Academy

After Williston Academy burned in 1949, the Williston Volunteer Fire Company was organized with twelve firemen and this 1931 American LaFrance pumper.

by fire in 1949 dramatized the need for a fire department. That year, the Williston Volunteer Fire Company was organized by Howard P. Lunderville and the late Roland Osborne. It began with twelve firemen, a 1931 America La France pumper and very little other equipment: there were no radios. The volunteers raised money by holding auctions, food sales and dances, and by charging $50.00 for each fire call. That first year, there were five calls. Today there is an average of 180 each year. The last remaining charter member is Howard Lunderville. The first fire station was in the Old Town Hall. In 1992, President George Bush was running for re-election. On the campaign trail he made a brief stop at the Burlington Airport. His motorcade then ran along Route 2 to Williston and the new firehouse. There Bush made a public address, and laughingly presented a live Dalmatian puppy to Fire Chief Lunderville.

Five years after the fire department was chartered, a new post office was built. The Williston Post Office was established in 1803, the same year as the one in Richmond, preceded in Chittenden County only by Burlington (1792) and Jericho (1798). According to postal historian Don Johnstone, the first postmaster was Ebenezer Judson. Customarily, between 1803 and 1853, the post offices were in the homes of the postmasters. Of the numerous postmasters, the Warren family stands out as having been involved with postal activities for many years. Charles D. Warren was appointed in 1889, Josie P. Warren in 1902, and Sylvia A. Warren in 1914; she continued as postmistress until 1951. For most years, the post office building was located on Route 2 at the southeast corner of its intersection with Oak Hill Road. The original post office rack with private pigeon holes from this building is still in existence in private hands. Two post offices in this area that were discontinued and their mail subsequently handled by Williston were Talcottville, which opened in 1897 and closed in 1903, and North Williston, an important railroad sta-

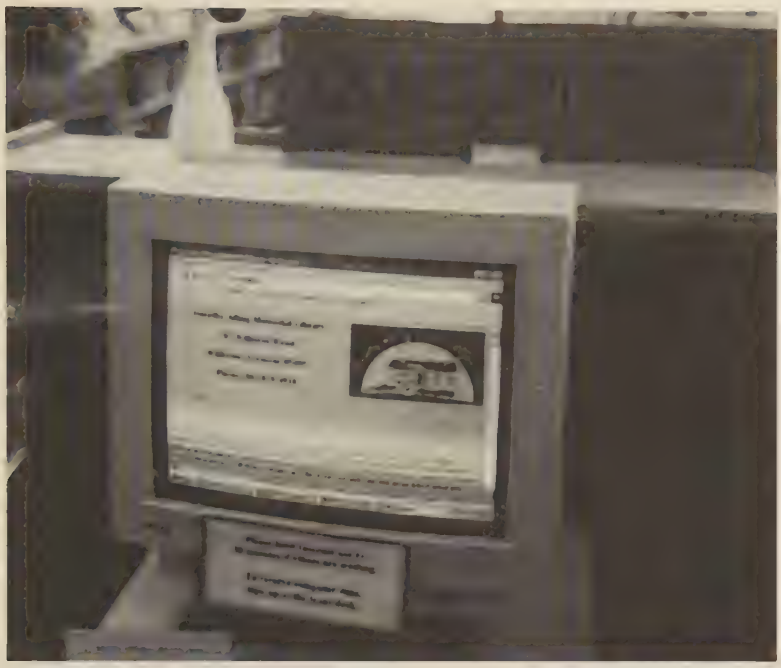
tion for mail distribution, which opened in 1865 and closed in 1942.

The Williston Post Office today continues with ever increasing activity under the 05495 zip code. In 1961, Postmaster John Bradish and carriers Robert Alberts and William Shortsleeves built and leased to the U.S. Postal Service a new building on Route 2. As business and residential volume increased steadily, Williston was designated a First Class Post Office and moved closer to the center of commercial growth and into a larger building on Commerce Street just west of Taft Corners and later still into Blair Park.

The number of new families with small children moving into Williston also enlivened interest in expanding the town library, the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library. A Williston public library had been established by a vote at the 1905 town meeting with an appropriation of $25 from the town and $100 from the state. It opened in one room of the Town Hall on October 7th of that year with an inventory of only 225 books. Of these, 98 had been donated and the rest came from the state. In the town's 1906 annual report, it was noted that "the library is open from 2 to 4 p.m. with an average of about 25 patrons each day it is open, and a total of 78 different patrons since the opening." The first library trustees were William M. Barber, Gertrude Whitney, Charles D. Warren, Frank Talcott and B. F. Brown. For many years, its dedicated librarian was Sylvia A. Warren.

Williston's library long fitted the stereotype of poor stepchild to the town government when it came to funding by the town's taxpayers. On the occasion of the town's sesquicentennial in 1913, the town doubled that year's library appropriation (to $50!) and initiated the tradition of fundraising by a children's festival and tag day. In all, the library cleared a whopping $72.62. The library account book gives a careful breakdown: $46.93 was received from tagged items; $36.61 from the sale of ice cream; $5.00 from popcorn and $6.65 from dance tickets.

Now undergoing its second major expansion, the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library includes ample facilities for young readers, a spacious local history room and several meeting rooms. It is equipped with the latest search computers.



In the late 1920's, the library moved from the old Town Hall to Warren's General Store at the east corner of Williston and Oak Hill Roads. Among the library's most dedicated sup-

porters was the gifted writer Dorothy Parker Alling. For many years, she read to children in her home during story hours, establishing a fund to buy children's books in honor of the memory of her grandfather, Jackson Miller. After she died in 1959, her husband Frank W. Alling donated the original brick library building. It was dedicated to her memory and named after her on April 8, 1960. As the town's population and library use mushroomed, a five-year fund drive resulted in the addition of 3,275 square feet in a Greek Revival extension, which was dedicated in May, 1986. The library's collection and use have steadily grown and ground has been broken for a second expansion project that will greatly increase the number of children's and public meeting rooms.

Even as the town built and enlarged its permanent library, it provided facilities where townspeople could indulge another of their passions—a love for music. Since 1958, Williston has had a town band with members of all ages. For many years, summers in Williston were a time for lemonade, popcorn, march music and show tunes on one of the town greens in front of Central School and beside the library. The approach of the United States Bicentennial Year of 1976 brought a campaign to raise funds to build a bandstand: the late Herbert Painter raised most of the money, chasing down $1,000 from IBM, $2,000 in federal revenue sharing funds and $1,500 from private citizens. S. T. Griswold Construction donated materials and equipment. Industrial arts students at Champlain Union High School, many of them from Williston, built the base of the bandstand. By July 27, 1976, an army of volunteers with hammers and nails and paintbrushes had finished the octagonal Williston Bicentennial Bandstand.

As the influx of new "bedroom community" residents changed Williston from a farming community to a residential town, Williston adapted. A new National Guard Armory was built on the site of the burned down old Williston Academy. The old Universalist Church-Grange Hall was expanded and remodelled into a new Town Hall in 1987. The last surviving

Williston's sports facilities include a lake, a country club, walking and bicycle trails, golf club and this driving range along Route 2. (Photo by Fred Stetson)

district school was bodily moved onto the Town Green where it is preserved by the Williston Historical Society. In the 1970's a new town sewage system enabled rapid growth north of Interstate 89.

But progress always comes at a cost. By the early 1970's, as old landmarks continued to disappear, many citizens became concerned. Publication of "A Look Around Essex and Williston" by the Chittenden County Historical Society led to the formation of the Williston Historical Society in 1973. Family records were donated to the Society's collection, housed in a separate room of the Alling Library, and were distilled and excerpted in the Society's newsletter. The Society has served as a catalyst for historical preservation of all kinds, including the publication of this book and the memorializing of Williston's most famous citizen, Governor Thomas Chittenden, with a lifesize statue.

Rising historical consciousness also led to the designation of the old Village of Williston as a Historic District eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. After a three-year selection and documentation process, in 1980 a sizeable portion of Williston Village on both sides of Route 2 was entered in the National Register. Twenty-six structures as well as several associated buildings were honored with the designation, mostly dwellings dating back to the 1790's and early 1800's. The district includes the Greek Revival Town Hall of 1842 (originally the Methodist Church) and three other buildings that originally were churches. The Thomas Chittenden Town Hall was the scene of many lively town meetings in its second floor public meeting rooms. From 1950 on, many of Williston's old buildings have been restored, including the old Brick Church and the 1869 vintage Federated Church, its steeple now being repaired and rebuilt after a successful fund drive.

Williston has continued to attract new residents from across the nation. Population pressures have led responsible residents to evaluate and attempt to plan and control this

growth. As this book goes to press in 1998 Williston is going through enormous growth and change. A major effort to control and direct that change has been made through the town's Planning, Zoning, Conservation, Historic Preservation, and other official commissions. These controls have sometimes been bitterly opposed by developers. Most voters want to avoid the haphazard highway border strip development that has marred many other communities. At one end of town there has been a strong effort to maintain the old village center as mostly unchanged. At the same time, at the other end light industrial and commercial growth around Industrial Avenue, Commerce Street, Marshall Avenue and Tafts' Corners have been encouraged. Hundreds of new homes and condominium townhouses have recently sprung up. The half of the township north of I-89 has become suburban; the southern half, where there are no sewers, still is open country. The large IBM plant, partly in Williston, strongly influenced this residential growth. But Williston is certainly no longer the sleepy village it was before the arrival of the interstate highway in the 1960's.

After a comprehensive town plan was approved in 1990, developers were authorized by the state to build controversial strip malls in Williston's northwestern corner between Taft's Corner and I-89.

In 1990, a comprehensive town plan was approved. As one result, developers have launched or proposed several controversial strip malls around Tafts Corners. After a long battle at the town and state levels, Wal-Mart, Toys-R-Us, Hannafords, Circuit City, Petsmart, and Home Depot were finally permitted to build large stores near where the St. George Road meets I-89. Most of the new commercial growth has taken place along Route 2 and Route 2A, ironically Williston's oldest commercial corridor. Citizens for Responsible Growth and the preservation-minded new majority on the Williston Select Board were able to hold up construction of a massive new Pyramid Mall for 20 years. Many residents feared all of the growth of recent years would destroy the unique beauty of Williston and lead to hopeless traffic jams and overburdened services.

The changes can be seen not only in new housing developments with names like Southridge, Meadow Run and Tafts Farm built in once-open fields, or in Vermont's hottest retail enclave at Tafts' Corner but is apparent from the vastly changed statistics as the Twentieth Century draws to an end.

In 1978, some 3,732 people lived in Williston; by 1998, the population had soared in only twenty years some seventy-seven percent to 6,602. At the same time, the tax base reflected by the Grand List had risen by 466 percent from $1,432,283 in 1978 to $6,685,143. The town budget was rising at an even faster rate, up from $352,497 in 1978 to $2.7 million—a 768 percent rise—while the school budget had soared at an even-higher rate, up from $989,497 in 1978 to $8.8 million, a 892 percent hike in only twenty years.

To help to accommodate these changes, Williston built a new school, is expanding its library and, after years of effort in 1987, with a $660,000 bond issue, rehabilitated the old Universalist Church and Grange Hall, long dilapidated, into the handsome Thomas Chittenden Town Hall. Built in 1860, the town hall became the anchor of the group of red brick civic buildings at the town's center and the most ambitious

restoration among the twenty-eight structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The rehabilitated town office building, its extensive renovation undertaken by architect Colin Lindberg, preserved the mid-Nineteenth Century feel of the old brick church. A new painted wood wing was added to the original brick building. To preserve the classic facade, the main entrance faces the parking area. Inside, the extended ground floor provided space for a large vault for town records, as well as rooms for administrative offices. Upstairs, a 90-seat meeting room was provided where, for the past decade, lively debates over the town's future have taken place. As Williston faces its future, much of the debate will undoubtedly focus on commercial and residential growth and their consequences.

The history of Williston has been one of unpredictable and uncontrollable changes often, if not usually, coming from the outside. Some farm families, like the David Ishams and the James McCulloughs, cling fiercely to their rural heritages even as developers and builders reshape other land around them. No one in Williston, as the Twentieth Century ends, remains disinterested in the course of Williston's past and future.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Preserving Williston

In 1980 a considerable portion of Williston village was entered on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic District consists of lots and buildings on both sides of Route 2, from Town Hall on the south side and the Nicole house on the northeast to Allen Brook. A dip in the south boundary line includes the Chapin Keynor house, which is set back from the main road.

A place on the National Register is an honor which signifies the importance of a structure as an archeological, architectural or historical site worthy of preservation. Owners of properties within the district are eligible for benefits including "a degree of protection from federally assisted, licensed and permitted undertakings which might adversely affect a listed property or jeopardize the property's environment." Owners may also be eligible, under strict guidelines, for assistance in stabilizing or restoring structures. Other benefits include special tax treatment for income-producing property when it has been rehabilitated or restored. Owners do not lose any control over their property. They may remodel, restore, demolish, sell, rent or otherwise use or dispose of their property.

The Thomas Chittenden Town Hall, left, originally the Gothic-steepled 1860 Universalist Church, and, right, its annex, originally erected in 1842 as the Methodist Church, now contain all city offices, meeting hall and police station.

Twenty-six structures together with a few associated outbuildings were included in the district. Most of these are dwellings, a few commercial or public buildings, some dating back to the 1790's. Four were originally built as churches.

The Greek Revival style Thomas Chittenden Memorial Town Hall Annex was originally erected in 1842 by the First Methodist Church. Many interior changes were made as interior space was adapted from time to time to accommodate various uses. In 1942, a vault was constructed to house town records and the town room was renovated for use by the town clerk and one single story was cut into two. Sometimes it served as a museum. Here, during the 1963 Bicentennial Celebration of Williston's charter, many historical exhibits were on display. During the early Twentieth Century, an upstairs enclosed wooden porch was added onto the front.

Later, it was removed. In 1958, an ell was built onto the Town Hall to serve as a new town fire station. This ell subsequently housed the Senior Citizens Center and now town planning and zoning offices, while the rest is Williston's police station.

Across the road and somewhat to the east stands the Old Congregational Church, a handsome red brick structure. At the front, the roof is surmounted by a double tiered octagonal tower resting on a rectangular base and capped by a rounded dome, in turn topped by a small ball. The walls are pierced by large Gothic style door and window openings. This pleasingly simple edifice is eclectic in style. It was built in 1832 for the Congregational Church Society. The original meeting house, erected by the town in 1796 for both religious and civic meetings, had become dilapidated and apparently was not adequately repaired. The 1832 structure in its turn was all but abandoned at the turn of the Twentieth Century when the Society joined with Methodists to form the Federated Church. After that, the old Congregational Church suffered from vandalism and lack of maintenance. Finally, beginning in 1963, young adults led by Mark Hutchins began its rehabilitation. Their efforts culminated in deeding of the building to the town to be used for civic purposes. Crawl space below the building was excavated to make space for a meeting room with platform, storage areas and kitchen. The sanctuary upstairs has been carefully restored to its condition in the 1860's.

East of the Thomas Chittenden Memorial Town Hall Annex stands a former church completed in 1860 for the First Universalist Society. Its Greek Revival style originally was supplemented by a tall pointed Gothic steeple which, because of structural problems, was replaced by the present truncated and domed structure in 1914. At that same time a rear extension, housing a stage, was added, a balcony was constructed in the sanctuary with two rooms and a ticket booth below. A large front porch was removed. The building was transformed into the Universalist Hall, sometimes known as

This veterans monument behind the town hall complex honors Williston citizens who died during the United States' twentieth century wars.

the Williston Opera House. It was used for a variety of theatrical and social events. In 1940 Thomas Chittenden Grange #531 purchased the property and razed the horse sheds out back. The Grange deeded the property to the town in 1978.

The present Federated Church was built in 1869 on the foundation walls of the once famous Eagle Tavern, built in the early 1820's and burned in 1850. It is nearly identical except for size to the First Baptist Church on St. Paul Street

in Burlington, built in 1863. In 1952, the Williston chancel along with the basement vestry of the Federated church were remodeled and a new electronic organ was installed, replacing the old pipe organ which is now in the Congregational Meetinghouse at the Shelburne Museum. An addition on the rear was completed in the 1960's and a larger extension in 1996. The most recent renovation is to the church steeple.

The oldest structure within the district is probably the partial remains of David Talcott's tannery, built in the 1790's, and now incorporated into the Howard Carpenter barn and sheds lying south of 780 Williston Road. The house dates from the early 1800's. Here is a photo gallery of some of the structures in the Williston Historic District:

Known locally as "the Griswold murder house," this handsome brick home on Hinesburg Road was the scene of the grisly 1860's stabbing death of a widow rumored to have returned with large quantities of gold from the California gold rush. Two local citizens were tried for hiring a "hitman" who came by train to carry out the contract killing. No gold was ever found.

Overgrown with weeds and new growth, this old wooden silo bears mute testimony to the transformation of Williston from farming community to suburb. (Photo by Fred Stetson)

This former 19th Century tavern on Route 2A is the headquarters of J.L. Davis Realty, developer of the Wal-Mart strip mall northwest of the I-89 interchange. (Photo by Fred Stetson)

Many of the 19th Century buildings in the Old Village were of the Greek Revival style, popular from 1830 until the Civil War, and had ample proportions, as shown in this rear view of the Solomon Miller house. (Photo by Fred Stetson)

The Solomon Miller house at the southwest corner of Oak Hill and Williston Roads was once headquarters of the Spiritualists and the scene of seances and more recently the home of the late postmaster Jack Brodish, a leading opponent of the "mailing" of Williston as president of Citizens for Responsible Growth.

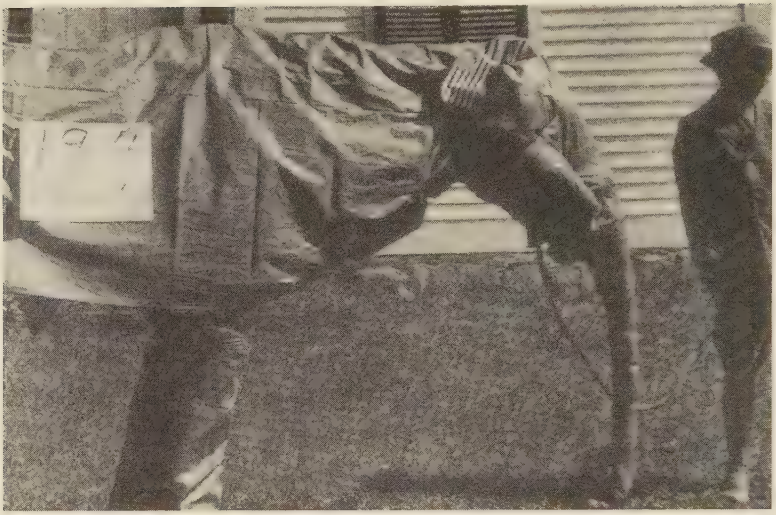
Built on the ruins of the original Thomas Chittenden House, the Clark farmhouse has been home to eight generations of Williston farmers.

CHAPTER NINE

Williston Celebrates

The stored memories of a community, both the written kind and the ones people carry with them, offer only odd fragments of what people think of as everyday life—the jobs people had, the prices they paid, the food they ate. But the days a community designates for slipping the leash of routine, those moments become the collective treasure stored in a separate vault in both kinds of memory, the personal and the public. Many decades later eyewitnesses will still recall with ease and vivid particulars the wonderful things that happened when the town celebrated, whatever the event. In the end, the celebration itself becomes an important event that soars past the everyday and helps people to imagine the grandness of the event or person they are honoring. At least that is how things have worked in Williston for a long time. Getting together to have fun has been something Williston has done well for years. In a community of farmers the simple fact of a day not spent at work already marks a special release from the usual rules.

When Williston celebrates, the subject does not stray far from the history of the community. Creating a link between



This brown paper wrapped horse passed for an elephant in the 1913 pageant which marked the 150th anniversary of Williston's founding.

good times and a consciousness of the past has worked to make the town value the heritage that its festivals honor. In other words, the celebrating becomes part of the same tradition that the town needs to remember. And Williston has always done it that way.

Readers of the *Burlington Free Press* have heard a lot about Williston celebrations. The most prominent headline on the front page for Friday, August 1, 1913 read: "Williston Commemorates Founding 150 Years Ago." The continued headline, slightly smaller, specifies: "Celebration Includes Procession, Old-Fashioned Sports and Out-of-Door Oratory and Ends with Pageant and Fireworks." The *Free Press* told the story in detail and conveyed the essentials, getting them exactly right. No name leapt out as the patron, underwriter or organizer of the event. It was the community:

> Williston, July 31.—In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of their town, the peo-

> ple of Williston to-day lived over the events of a century and a half. . . . The celebration was financed and carried through entirely by the present inhabitants of the town, and represented prolonged labor and quite general co-operation on the part of the townsmen. Perfect weather made their efforts a complete success.

The story fills two columns of the front page and then goes on to take most of page two. Some of the entertainment sounds odd by the standards of electronic media. To get an idea of the world of 1913, such a different age, there is the newspaper itself to consult. On the front page near the Williston story runs a considerable advertisement from F. D. Abernethy. In great detail the ad describes the many varieties of parasol on sale: natural pongee, fancy wash silk, hemstitched linen, children's parasols, and many kinds of carriage parasols, some in natural shantung. (Value $3.00, priced at $2.00). Above is the weather forecast: "Fair to-day." That's all.

The *Free Press* coverage does not include every word of every speech, but the important ones are there. The most prominent, described as "the oration of the day," delivered by Warren R. Austin of St. Albans, had as its title "The First Republic." It was not about Rome but about Vermont, designated by Mr. Austin as "the first republic of the Western Hemisphere," a focus that announces a communal interest in history. The artfully constructed speech makes a connection between the distinctive feature of Vermont—its written constitution—and the town of Williston. The earliest inhabitants of Williston are the people to thank for that constitution, Austin says, in a style of oratory that belonged to the Nineteenth Century and was still the model for public talks in 1913.

After that speech the *Free Press* includes the full text of the epic poem recounting Williston's history—and there are no short epic poems—by Daniel L. Cady. Vermonters recog-

nized the poet's name as the usual one for occasions requiring the solemnity and pomp that only verse could give.

Only after the complete poem does the story add that "Governor Fletcher said a few words." They must have seemed like a few. In his brevity Governor Fletcher showed some wit and self-awareness. He found himself seated near C. D. Wright, Williston's representative in Montpelier, a man well known to the Governor as an upholder of flat-rate taxation. The Governor had opposite opinions, as Vermonters knew. The *Free Press* noted everyone seated on the platform besides Mr. Austin, the epic poet, and the Governor.

In the same story the newspaper included another event the same day that linked Williston and its past, "the Cilley school reunion." People in Williston knew this name for Williston Academy, and readers of the newspaper were expected to know it, too, since the formal name does not appear. "Mrs. Edmund Whitney, the only living person who taught under Mr. Cilley, was a guest of honor."

The high point of the celebration came at night, and could not have been more historical. The "pageant," as it was called, stood out as the main event. Again, the double emphasis on community and history: "The parts were all taken by Williston people, and the tableaux portrayed in vivid form the hundred and fifty eventful years of Williston's existence." The idea of portraying a "tableau" does not belong to most town entertainments today, but people in New England—and England—recognized it as a standard part of community festivities. Sometimes called a *tableau vivant* or living picture, each scene presented costumed people who evoked a precise moment or event in history. Williston had enough history to make several scenes, all listed by title in the *Free Press*:

> "The Wilderness"—An Indian camp; victorious war party returns with captives; preparations for the torture; surprise by whites under Thomas Chittenden, rescuer; Mr. Chittenden decides to return later and settle here.

"The Charter, June 7, 1763"—Granting of charter by Governor Wentworth; reading of excerpts from original charter.

"Domestic Scene"—Guests arrive and announce that General Lafayette will stop at Williston on his way to Burlington.

"Arrival of Lafayette"—Reception; minuet.

"In the Midst of Toil Comes Pleasure"—The toilers; pleasure; the dance; trouble; reclaiming the flock.

"The Civil War"—Answering the call.

"Rural Pastimes"—The singing school; the husking bee; the Virginia reel.

"The Spirit of the Present"—America.

The day ended with fireworks, the most dramatic finale for an outdoor celebration that was particularly beautiful because of the "natural amphitheater of great beauty" where it was held (a place on Route 2 not far from Williston's Catholic Church).

As is often the case, someone who remembers that day admits to being impressed with something that never made it to the newspaper. Marion Parker Marvin, born in 1905, still remembers that day of unusual activity. The picture that remains in her mind could not be more vivid: "That was the first day I ever saw someone ride sidesaddle. I thought that was great."

The choice of subject for the tableaux shows that the people of Williston were making a connection between their celebration and earlier ones. Two of their eight scenes had to do with the famous visit of General Lafayette in 1825. Before the celebration that the *Free Press* recorded, that visit had been Williston's biggest day.

Many older onlookers could still remember the commotion over Lafayette, an important ally and hero of the Revolution, but not everyone who saw "the national guest," as the tableau called the honored foreigner, understood all of

Marquis de Lafayette paraded through Williston in 1826 enroute to dedicate the rebuilt Old Mill at the University of Vermont and look for lands owed him as a Revolutionary War general's pension claim. He was escorted by the Williston Light Horse.

why he had come. Lafayette passed through Williston for the same reason that the town could support so much commercial activity so early on, namely, because it lay on the main road or turnpike between Montpelier and Burlington. His immediate reason for stopping at Burlington had to do with a building project at the University of Vermont. The "Old Mill," as it would later be known, had been burned "by an incendiary" and had been rebuilt in one year. The University invited Lafayette to dedicate the cornerstone. Maybe no one knew that the General had been rewarded by Congress for his crucial service to the United States with the extraordinary gift of 90,000 acres—of his choosing. By the time Lafayette reached Vermont he had visited 24 of the 25 United States, and had apparently not yet made up his mind (Maine, where he stopped on the way, had been number 24).

With so many claims on his time, Lafayette did not record his thoughts about the trip as he went. But his competent traveling companion, Auguste Levasseur wrote an account published soon after the fact as *Lafayette in America*. From this eyewitness to the whole journey we have details about the Vermont part of the trip . The pressure of trying to cover so much territory meant that travel could not be leisurely. Levasseur notes the unusual speed to explain why he could not note more. "We travelled through these states [Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont] at a speed of eleven miles per hour." Relays of horses were arranged along the way. Vermonters who saw him pass spoke of Lafayette's carriage pulled by four matched white horses. (Marion Marvin reports that her grandmother saw Lafayette's horses and years later told young Marion about the sight.) In Tunbridge every house in town was candle lit. In Williston people hung banners from their houses. A crowd assembled in front of the Town Hall (the Old Meeting House) where an often repeated Williston story got started, and may also have happened. A Williston man waiting on the steps did not like having another man walk past him, so he complained, "Get out of my way.

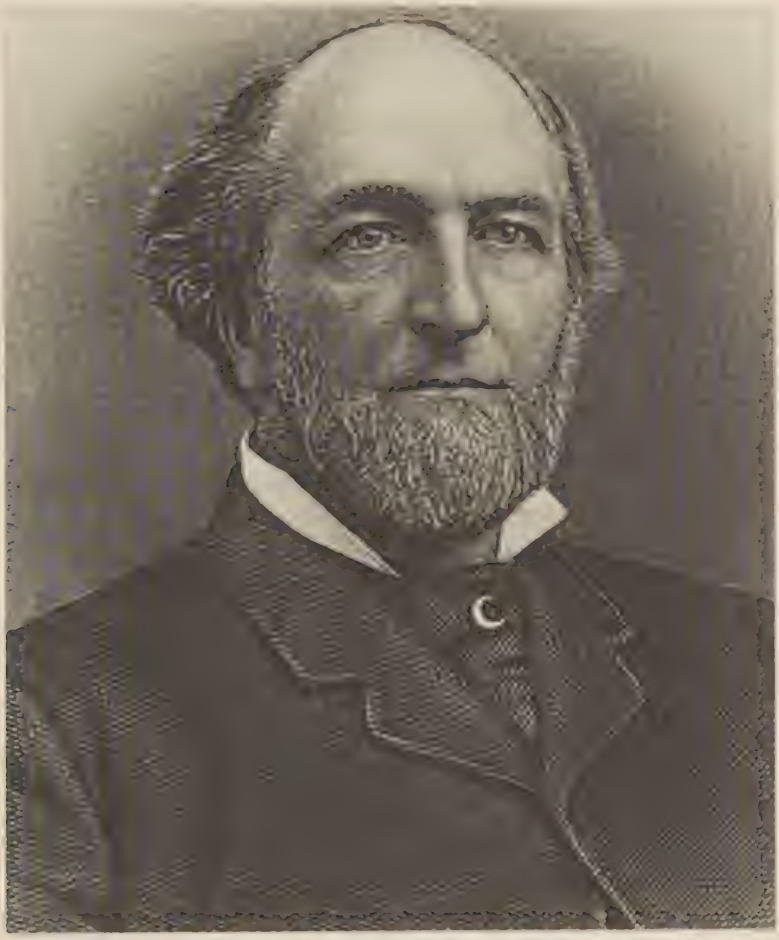
I'm trying to see Lafayette." The polite and firm answer came back, "My good man, I am Lafayette."

At every stop Lafayette made, veterans of the Revolution identified themselves to the general who listened to their descriptions of exactly where they had fought. On the way to Williston the town's Light Horse Militia, riding Morgan horses, accompanied Lafayette. Beyond Williston, the entourage went to Burlington for the dedication of the building that was the University of Vermont, and for more celebration. The plan called for Lafayette to leave Burlington by steamboat, a boat called the *Phoenix*. But before that the general had to be received at the home of Governor Van Ness, who had been accompanying him since Windsor. At the Governor's splendid home, dancing and celebrating went on well into the evening. The Governor lived at Grasse Mount. The man who accompanied Lafayette commented on the well-informed women who spoke to the General:

> In the state of Vermont, as in all the rest of the Union, the females are not strangers either to the principles of government, or to the obligations of patriotism; their education, more liberal than in any part of Europe, places them in a condition more worthy the rank of thinking beings. . . .

Lafayette's visit helped remind Williston that people who knew anything at all about Vermont, knew the importance of Williston in relation to the founders of the state. Lafayette may have had "a canine appetite for praise," as Thomas Jefferson said of him, but by 1825 it did not matter. The generation of founding fathers was suddenly less numerous, and people everywhere happily honored those who had worked closely with George Washington. In Williston, the memory of origins meant that people thought of Thomas Chittenden, in whose name the next great celebration would be organized.

Not many but a few of the same Williston residents who saw Lafayette also attended the town's next grand day, toward the end of Williston's century of grand buildings. Anyone in Williston on August 19, 1896 said that there had never been so many people in town. That day the town dedicated the monument to its most famous citizen, Thomas Chittenden.



Civil War hero and former Governor John W. Stewart dedicated the 1896 monument, the only monument in the state to honor its first governor for more than a century.

Estimates put the crowd in Williston at around 2,000 people that day. Williston had become easier to reach than it had been for Lafayette now that the railroad could take people as close as North Williston. From there many people came to the village center in horse drawn carriages. The state legislature ordered the publication of a booklet that preserved for posterity all the particulars of the ceremony as well as the names of those responsible for the monument and its dedication. As had already happened so many times in Williston, the credit went to committees.

The official booklet printed by the General Assembly explained that committees had done what was needed at every level. Montpelier started the project in 1894 by passing into law an act that provided for the erection of a monument to Governor Chittenden. It gave the town of Williston $3,000 to erect a granite monument and named five commissioners to see the project through to completion: a former governor, Civil War hero John Lester Barstow of Shelburne, to chair the commission, Torrey E. Wales, A. C. Robinson, Henry Root and Secretary of State Chauncey W. Brownell of Williston were given that charge. Barstow was an expert at planning such events: he had helped to organize the centennial of the British surrender at Yorktown. But the undertaking turned out to need other committees as well. The commissioners took care of buying the land and preparing it for the monument. Henry Root, who had been born in Williston, gone west at nineteen, invented many of the devices on the cable cars of San Francisco before coming home to Williston to retire, showed special generosity in paying for preparing the site and having the monument installed. At Root's behest, a majority of the commission voted to hire a San Francisco architect, J. C. White, to design the monument. Root paid the fee as well as a number of other cost overruns out of his own pocket, in all contributing some $1,500, a substantial amount at the time. The designer recommended the use of a Barre granite base for the monument, ten feet square and weighing some fifteen

tons. Above the base was a large block bearing on the front in raised block letters this inscription:

1895
Vermont
to
Thomas Chittenden
One of Her Founders
And Her First Governor
Born January 6, 1730
Died August 25, 1797

On one of the sides, Henry Root paid extra to have a large stone medallion scultped by Marr & Gordon of Barre; on the other side, a ship. On a smaller block above the base, they carved the Vermont coat of arms, said to have been designed by Governor Chittenden. Above the monument, there was to be a bronze deer's head. Then the planning of the day required the skills of people good at imagining what would be needed and what might go wrong. There was a committee of arrangements for dedication, an executive committee, a committee on program and printing, a committee on grounds and a committee on entertainment. Since 1876, Lucius Chittenden had actively encouraged efforts to honor his great-grandfather. He had gathered sketches and commissioned an artist to make a composite print (see frontispiece of this book) of the first governor, since there was no known portrait from life. It was only fair that in its write-up the Burlington *Daily Free Press* (as it was then called) gave credit that day, as it would again in 1913, to the community:

> Much of the success of the day was due to the people of Williston. Their hospitality was of a generous nature and all present carried away only pleasant recollections of their visit to the pretty village.

To make the occasion both public and solemn, Williston prepared its greatest celebration of the century. The next day's *Free Press* tells the tale in vivid detail:

> The dedication was a great event for the town of Williston . . . . The decorations began fully two miles west of the village and at nearly every house there was a profusion of flags and bunting. A large flag stretched across the street opposite the store of G. L. Clark & Co. bore the word "Welcome." On one side of an evergreen arch near the entrance to the cemetery was the inscription "Vermont Honors Her Great Men." On the reverse side were the words "Freedom and Unity."
>
> An excellent dinner was served at the Town Hall at noon. At 12:45, four troops of cavalry were drawn up in a line along the road for Governor Woodbury and his staff and invited guests to inspect. The band played "Hail to the Chief."

The band was provided by the Vermont National Guard, which had escorted the First Battalion of the Guard by train from its summer encampment in Burlington to North Williston Station and then had marched to the village. Also aboard the train were the Governor and three ex-governors, Barstow, Stewart and E. J. Orbs. They were met by a cavalcade of carriages and, to the strains of marching music, were escorted to the Town Hall by Troop C of the Third Cavalry (which had also come on the train) as well as three troops of U.S. Cavalry which had ridden over on Morgan horses from Fort Ethan Allen.

Miss Bessie B. Chittenden of New York, also representing the descendants of Governor Chittenden, unveiled the monument, which had been shrouded in American flags until this dramatic moment. The keynote speaker of the day was ex-Governor Stewart, who had been speaker of the Vermont

House four times, governor for two years and eight years in Congress. His grandfather had been with Richard Montgomery at Quebec and John Stark at the Battle of Bennington and had served in the militia under Governor Chittenden. With so many connections to Vermont's past, Stewart had seemed the logical choice to speak at a moment meant to evoke that past as richly as could be done. Governor Stewart understood that the celebration had to make that past seem present. He knew exactly what people were thinking, it seems, in his impressive comments:

> After a lapse of nearly one hundred years since the death of Thomas Chittenden, the first governor of Vermont, during which period several generations of her sons and daughters have been born and died, the recent action of the legislature, . . . may seem too tardy recognition of their inestimable worth; but this long delay, as it seems to me, serves only to emphasize the esteem and veneration in which Vermonters of this day hold the name of their first and greatest governor.

After hours in the summer sun, the crowd may have been grateful when Lucius Chittenden cut short his prepared speech, saving much of it for the booklet the state would soon publish. His words for the people of Williston were charged with emotion:

> My Fellow Townsmen:
>
> At this moment, my heart is full to the overflow. Yonder, two miles away, on the old homestead of the governor, watered by the silvery Winooski, in a glorious landscape of mountain, river, forest and intervale, I was born to a happy childhood and youth. Nearer, and only a mile away, stood the old red school house where my education began. All

around were the homes of the Taylors, the Thompsons, the Bradleys, Chapins, Bushnells, Fay and Clark and other friends whose memories are fragrant with affection.

I can almost see the house where lived "Uncle" Joe Bradley, who loaned me my first book in natural history and taught me to love birds and all God's creatures, a pursuit which has been the great pleasure of my life. Nearer, yet, is that God's acre, where rest four generations of my family, and whither I have followed a kind father, a loving mother and three sisters . . . .

From these quiet scenes, I, a boy in years, went out into the active life of the busy world. Now, when I have passed the days of our years which are three-score years and ten, I have come back to the town of my nativity, to renew my earliest friendships and take a part in this interesting tribute to my honored ancestor. It is not strange that in such an hour thoughts crowd upon me that I cannot express . . . .

Fellow Vermonters! Why has the memory of Thomas Chittenden survived for a century? Why does Vermont seek its perpetuity? Why do you bring your children here to assist in the dedication of this monument in the imperishable granite of the everlasting hills?

The answer to these questions is the refutation of those false prophets who tell our young men that the integrity of our ancestors has lost its value—that moral principles no longer influence men or control communities. Such precepts are more than erroneous—they are infamous.

In this, which may be my last visit to the place of my nativity, let this my last counsel to my fellow townsmen be: to remember the lesson taught by

> the lives of Thomas Chittenden and his contemporaries. Be true to the principles of your ancestors. Follow in the footsteps of him whose monument you dedicate today.
>
> Then shall Vermont be in the future as she has been in the past, the mother of good men and statesmen. Every hamlet in her mountains shall be the nursery of soldiers true to the flag of our Republic. And other centennials shall know her as the one state that has always been true to herself, her country and her God.

At the conclusion of Lucius Chittenden's speech, the Rev. A. D. Barber, "in a few well-chosen words," thanked the dignitaries in the name of the people of Williston. The crowd, men, women and children, sang "America." The honor guard of the Vermont militia shouldered arms and began the march back to their camp.

Quietly, the crowd drifted over to the new monument and then a few yards to the east where, marked by the Vermont state flag, was the grave of Thomas Chittenden with its simple epitaph:

> His was a life of usefulness;
> let those who read strive to
> imitate his virtues.

Then everybody went home.

That Chittenden monument, now more than one hundred years old, records a founding father of Vermont, often referred to by Vermonters who knew him as "our Washington." But the monument also belongs to the tradition of town celebrations, a living tradition. At the time of the national bicentennial in 1976, Williston did not have to reinvent the idea of a community, patriotic event. The heritage of the town gave plenty of guidance. The buildings that

belonged to Williston's past served as links to the tradition of celebrating. The Old Brick Church served as a church again for that special event. Williston residents improvised costumes as their grandparents had done when the town had celebrated that same past. The parade now had cars instead of light horse militia, but the spirit was the same as when Lafayette had come through. Elderly and venerable members of the community could ride in convertibles instead of carriages, but differences remained superficial. The essential fact, the spirit of the community honoring its past, had not changed at all.

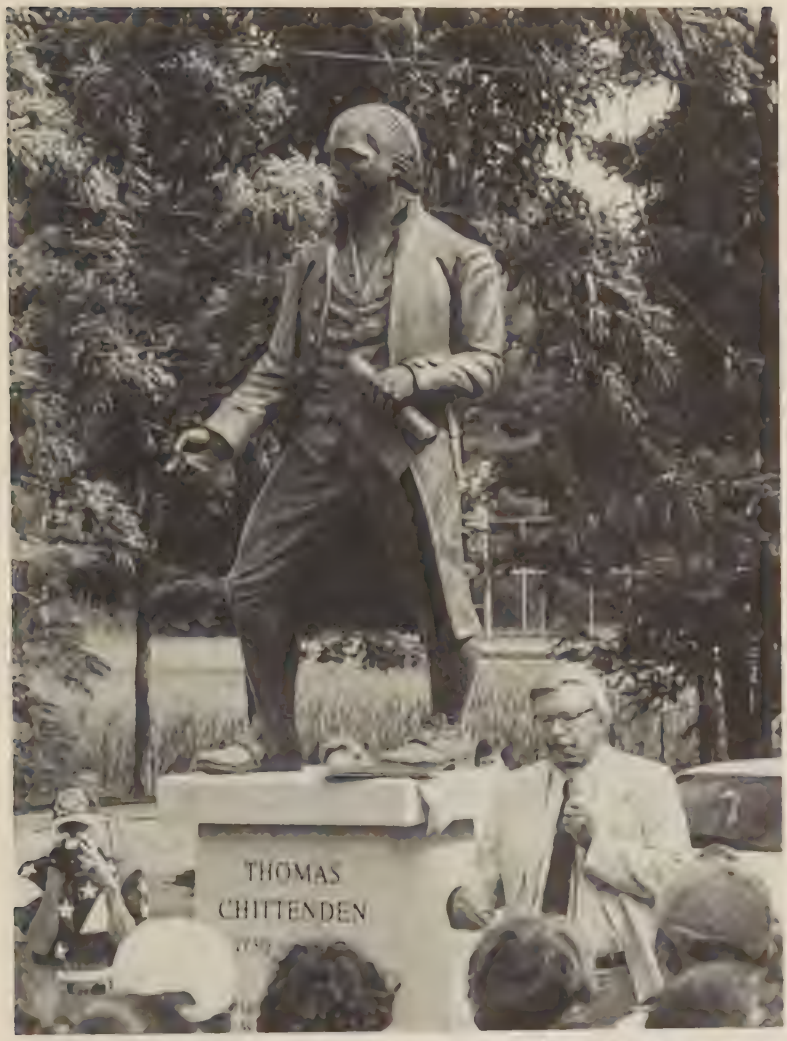
It would be a mistake to think that Williston only celebrates when there is an occasion of high seriousness. The town put on a wonderful pageant, according to the people who still remember it, in 1920. After the fright of the great influenza epidemic and the tension of World War I, the relief of having survived made people want to celebrate in a spirit of gratitude. Photographs from the event show that it took place in the same natural amphitheater used in 1913, but this festival was less elaborate, almost spontaneous, if any communal effort can be described that way. One photo shows two young women dressed in very authentic looking Scottish kilts. The costumes were "rented from a place in New York," according to an informed source. And the two teenagers wearing them were Marion and Dot Parker, who would later become Marion Marvin and Dorothy Alling. Mrs. Marvin regards that festival as a celebration that the town seems in danger of forgetting. She admits that it seemed like a great event "in those days." To show how well she understands the difference between celebrations then and now, she describes how pleased children were in those days to celebrate a birthday. It meant that your mother made a cake for you, then went out in the yard and got some myrtle to put around it to look nice. No candles.

For a long time the biggest holiday for the town of Williston has been the Fourth of July. Old timers remember that it always meant a bushel basket of fireworks. There was a parade, too. Everyone got together to catch up on news. All

the tiny connections— knowing whose children play baseball, knowing how the gardens are doing—those small concerns renew the community's perception of itself as a community, and continue what that community has done from its beginnings.

In order to be vital, traditions have to be part of what people do, not what they used to do. Williston today has a tradition of strong public awareness of its own origins. The success of the Williston Historical Society is visible to the thousands of people who drive through the village on Route 2 every day. The brick buildings that stand out more and more for their beautiful proportions and style prove not only that the town prospered in the early nineteenth century, but that it still values that part of its heritage. But that would be the end of something if the Historical Society worked only to keep buildings from being neglected.

In a related but different spirit, in 1996-1997 the Historical Society undertook a project to start up rather than preserve something. To honor Williston's most famous citizen, the local group voted to arrange to have a statue built to represent Vermont's First Governor. Before this time, there existed no public statue of him anywhere. After a process that lasted for months, the designated committee arranged to have the work done by Frank C. Gaylord, a nationally recognized sculptor whose studio is in Barre, Vermont. Gaylord's recent accomplishments included the multi-figured Korean War Memorial in Washington, D. C. After months of consulting with Gaylord and with experts able to provide historical advice, the committee approved a statue that was cast in bronze over the winter months of 1997. By 1998 the statue was complete; it was unveiled by Governor Howard Dean on July the Fourth. In fact, two statues were cast, one for the town of Williston and the other to go to the State House in Montpelier. The Historical Society hopes that its dedication will encourage Williston residents to repeat the honor paid to Governor Chittenden when the first monument to him was dedicated in 1896.



Frank Gaylord of Barre, nationally renowned sculptor of the Korean War Monument on the Mall in Washington, D.C., was selected by the Chittenden Statue Committee of the Williston Historical Society to execute a lifesize bronze statue to honor Vermont's first governor. The completed statue, at right, was dedicated July Fourth, 1998 on the town green; State Senator Frank Smallwood here details Chittenden's accomplishments to a crowd of more than 150. Designing the statue, deciding on its costume and attitude, sculpting and forging took two years. At upper left appears the half-scale maquette accepted by the committee and, here and at lower right, various stages of Gaylord's artistry as he enlarged the model. (Photo by Fred Stetson)

Vermont sculptor Frank Gaylord, himself a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, rests beside the full-scale clay figure of Revolutionary War statesman Thomas Chittenden before sending the lifelike figure off to be cast in a Rutland foundry.

The Chittenden Statue Committee examines the intermediate form of the statue at Gaylord's studio in Barre before "accepting" it. From right, chairman Lincoln Brownell, Williston Historical Society vice president Robert Reese, sculptor Gaylord, and authors Willard Sterne Randall and Nancy Nahra, who researched and authenticated the physical details and costume of the statue.

Now, after another hundred years, Williston still remembers its own heroes. Not the monuments and not the historic buildings, but the regard for history that made Williston preserve those buildings is what makes its past so present. That rootedness also makes Williston part of people's personal history, the kind of place that people think of as a home town, and have from the earliest days of Vermont.

Governor Howard Dean unveils the statue in Williston on July 4th, 1998 as sculptor Gaylord and many members of the Chittenden family from as far away as Hawaii look on. (Photo by Fred Stetson)

APPENDIX I

Williston Proprietors—June 7, 1763

(Names appear in the order and form listed on Charter)

Willis, Samuel
Brush, John, Jr.
Williams, Nathaniel
Gold, Ebenezer
Wood, Jeremiah
Wood, Israel
Allen, Samuel
Weeks, John
Mowbray, John
Carll, John
Wood, Stephen
Hart, Samuel
Rogers, James
Harrison, Nathan'l
Conklin, Rich'd
Smith, Henry
Platt, Jonas
Platt, Zopher, Jun.
Ketcham, Israel
Smith, Joseph
Ketcham, Solomon
Smith, Ezekiel
Denton, Benjamin
Oakes, Thomas
Fleet, Simon, Jun.
Weeks, Ezekiel
Brush, Jacob
Chichester, David
Fleet, Thomas, Jun.
Seaman, Samuel of Jerusalem
Hart, Cornelius
Stratton, Cornelius
Tobias, Christ'r
Rogers, Obediah
Conklin, Phillip
Rogers, Hezekiah
Brush, Thomas
Rogers, Micah
Rogers, Hezekiah, Jun.
Ketcham, Joel
Rogers, Ezekiel
Conklin, Hubbard
Wood, Jonas
Gillet, Abel
Conklin, Stephen
Smith, Shubill
Conklin, Timothy
Brush, Reuben
Conklin, Thomas, Jun.

Rogers, Joshua
Averill, Samuel
Sammis, Henry
Kelley, Nathan'l
Ketcham, Phillip
Temple, Hon.John, Esq.
Chichester, James
Atkinson, Tho., Esq.
Wentworth, Mk.J. J., Esq.
Seaman, Benj.
Temple, William, Esq.
Wortman, Tunis
Atkinson, Tho. Jun. Esq.
Frost, William, Sen.
Wentworth, Benning, Esq. (Gov.)

APPENDIX II

Williston, Vermont 1790 Census—Heads of Families

Adams, John
Allen, Nathan
Allen, Elihu
Ames, Ezra
Andress, Benoni
Arnold, James
Auger, Lt. Felix
Barber, Martin
Barnett, Samuel
Bates, David
Beach, Silas
Beach, John
Bishop, Daniel
Bishop, Daniel, Juinr.
Bradley, Stilman
Bradley, Eben
Bradley, James
Bradley, Joseph
Bradley, Elisha
Brownson, Amos, Esqr.
Brownson, Asa
Center, Jeremiah
Chamberlain, John
Chamberlain, Samuel
Chittenden, Giles
Chittenden, His Excly, Thomas, Esqr.
Close, Stephen
Cook, John
Cook, John
Crane, James
Crane, Peter
Devorex, John
Dodge, Stephen
Donaly, Robert
Everts, Jesse
Fay, Nathan
Ferrend, Jared
Flemming, Asa
Graves, William
Graves, Thaddeus
Gray, Zalmon
Hallock, Content
Hallock, Stephen
Hallock, Stephen, Jr.
Harrington, Timothy
Hawley, Philo
Holmes, George
Hurbard, David
Jones, John
Jones, Hoseah
Joslin, Jacob
Judeon, Enoch
Lee, Timothy

Leonard, Joel
Lowry, Gad
Meigs, Simon
Miller, Solomon, Esqr.
Murray, Curtis
Murray, Kesiah
Packings, Andrew
Parker, Cardy
Porter, John
Retty, James
Rogers, Thomas
Russel, Oliver
Shaw, Daniel
Smith, Abraham
Snider, Jacob
Spafford, Jonathan, Esqr.
Squire, Benjamin
Squires, Stephen
Stevens, James
Stevens, James, Junr.
Talcott, David
Talcott, Parker
Talcott, David, Junr.
Taylor, Eldad, Junr.
Taylor, John
Taylor, Eldad
Taylor, Abraham
Tomlinson, Eliphalet
Trowbridge, Stephen
Trowbridge, Seth
Tuttle, Timothy
Wade, Joshua
Walden, Abiathar
Welden, Benjamin
Whitcomb, Robert
Winslow, Lemuel
Winslow, Nathaniel

APPENDIX III

Williston, Vermont 1800 Census — Heads of Families

Adams, Samuel
Allen, Elihu
Allen, Elihu, Jr.
Allen, Nathan
Atwater, Jonathan
Atwater, Linus
Auger, Phillip
Barber, John
Barber, Oliver
Barney, Heman
Barney, Simeon
Barney, Thomas
Barns, Joseph
Bartholomew, Levi
Bates, David
Bates, David, Jr.
Beach, John
Bean, Sanbon
Beely, Joseph
Bennett, William
Bottum, Lemuel
Bradley, Elisha
Bradley, Ezra
Bradley,James
Bradley, Joseph
Bradley, Stillman
Brown, George
Brown, Jesse
Bushnel John
Carpenter, Allen
Castle, Asher
Castle, John
Catlin, Roswell
Chittenden, Bethuel
Chittenden, Elizabeth
Chittenden, Giles
Chittenden, Truman
Cleveland, Samuel
Cobb, Asahel
Coming, Noah,
Coming, Richard
Colby, Ellet
Collins, Rev. A.C.
Colman, Zadok
Cook, Silas
Dart, Obadiah
Dart, Simeon
Davis, William
Doolittle, Theophillus
Downer, Anne
Downer, Caleb
Downer, John
Downer, Samuel
Dudley, William

French, Isaac
French, Jeremiah
Galusha, Daniel
Glinds, Eli
Graves, Thaddeus
Hall, John
Howard, Ebenezer
Hoyt, Josiah
Isham, Isaac C.
Johnson, Dan
Jones, John
Joslin, Amasa
Judson, Enoch
Kimball, Amos
Lafardy, James
Latch, Lasdol
Lawrence, Abijah
Leach, Ephraim
Lee, Simeon
Lee, Timothy
Lincoln, John
Martin, Deodat
Marvin, Matthias
McNeil, Isaac
Miller, Elisha
Miller, Solomon
Minor, John
Moulton, Rufus
Munson, Caleb
Munson, John
Murry, Beriah
Murry, Calvin
Murry, Curtis
Murry, Mack
Newland, Abner
Parker, Carde
Perkins, Andrew
Place, Robert
Pulford, Elisha
Redfield, Reuben
Seeley, Stephen
Segar, Jonathan
Segar Joseph
Shaw, Daniel
Shaw, Rufus
Smith, Alby
Smith, Caleb
Smith, Elijah
Smith, John
Smith, Sarah
Spafford, Jonathan
Spafford, Jonathan, Jr.
Squires, Richard
Stearns, Eleazer
Stearns, Pierce
Stearns, Ralph
Stevens, Andrew
Stevens, John
Stevens, Saffor
Stewart Calvin
Talcott, David
Talcott, David, Jr.
Talcott, Jonathan
Talcott, Josiah
Talcott, Parker
Talcott, Timothy
Talcott, Zela
Taylor, Edward
Taylor, Ester
Taylor, Ezra

Taylor, John
Taylor, Joseph
Taylor, Willis
Thatcher, Abothy
Thatcher, Elisha
Thatcher, John
Thatcher, Levi
Townes, Edmond
Tyler, Nathan
Walker, Phillip
Walston, Obadiah
Ward, Timothy
Warren, Stephen L.
Washburn, Isaac
Winslow, John
Winslow, Lemuel
Winslow, Nathaniel
Wright, Elisha

APPENDIX IV

Williston Veterans of War of 1812

Bradley, Elisha
Chamberlin, John
Bradley, Joseph
Fay, John
Miller, Solomon
Brundage, Abram
Spencer, Ethan

APPENDIX V

Williston Volunteers in the Civil War

Alexander, Robert J.
Alexander, Samuel
Allen, George H.
Allen, William
Allen, Orville E.
Austin, William
Baldwin, George L.
Batey, Isaac
Beach, William
Bliss, George J.
Bliss, John
Blodgett, Henry P.
Boyle, John
Bradley, Henry H.
Brown, Bertram F.
Brownell, Horace W.
Brownell, Martin
Bullock, Prentice
Burke, Michael
Bushey, Oliver
Chapin, Charles B.
Chapin, Cornelius
Chapin, Edgar W.
Chapman, William R.
Charles, Benjamin F.
Christmas, George
Clay, William
Cole, George W.
Culligan, Thomas J.
Davis, Luther
Demars, Israel
Doyne, Frederick
Doyne, William
Draffin, Samuel
Dubia, Peter
Ennis, James
Fay, Alfred C.
Fay, Ransom T.
Fortune, William H.
French, Lucian W.
Gill, Charles A.
Green, William C.
Gregory, John
Hall, Charles
Hall, Hiram H.
Hall, William H.
Harper, Charles A.
Harper, John F.
Harper, Nelson
Holton, David
Holton, Edward A.
Irish, Richard
Isham, Alfred W.
Isham, Benjamin

Isham, Hiram
Isham, Jackson
Kelly, Lawrence
Kelly, Thomas
Labelle, Peter
Lander, Joseph
Lander, Lewis
Lander, Peter
Larkin, John
Lee, Alonzo
Lee, Harmon
Lee, Melancthon
Lee, Thomas J.
Loggins, Cassius
Loggins, George A.
Mcherd, David S.
Magaghan, John
Marshall, Alonzo D.
Mattock, Ichabod W.
Miles, Thomas
Miles, William
Miller, George
Mitchell, William H.
Munson, Albert
Munson, Seth
Nichols, Leroy B.
Osborne, Alfred M.
Osborne, Edward
Osborne, Eli
Osborne, Walter
Patton, James
Phelps, Haskell M.
Phelps, Oscar
Pine, George
Potter, Charles H.
Prentice, Oscar
Prior, Homer
Reynolds, Gordon
Roleau, Dorr A.
Roleau, John B.
Rowland, John
Sargent, Joseph
Shepard, William
Simonds, George A.
Simonds, Willis S.
Sister, Charles
Sprague, Charles A.
Starks, Henry
Taft, Nathan S.
Tebo, Albert
Tyler, Frank J. C.
Walston, Amos
Walston, Albert
Walston, William G. F.
Ward, Frank
Welch, George P.
Whitney, William

APPENDIX VI

Williston Volunteers In World War I

Allen, Melbourne A.
Blair, Allie C.
Bombard, William Aboy
Boutin, Philbert
Brown, Charles Martin
Burnett, Raymond
Chapman, Chester Charles (Navy)
Clark, Elam T.
Clark, Wright
Degree, Walker Taft
Forbes, John Albert
Hurlburt, Duane Beach
Hurlburt, Merton Homer
Johnson, Lester Ward
Lashua, Fred J.
Lashua, Walter Clifford
Latulip, Arthur
Martell, Antoine
Martin, Andrew Eugene
Merchant, Henry
Merrill, Lionel
Miles, Walter
Miles, Emerson
Miller, Joseph Gilbert
Muir, Arthur William
Palady, Frank J.
Parker, Laura
Prior, Jason Comstock
Rymil, Arthur H.
Sheahan, Clayton R.
Whitten, John Harold
Williams, Albert Berg

APPENDIX VII

Williston in World War II *

Alberts, Robert H.
Alling, George Dana
Aseltine, Harold Farrand
Aseltine, James Merrill
Bates, Guy Wilbur
Begins, William Clifford
Belair, Edmund Alexander, Jr.
Belair, Edward Patrick
Belair, Roy Edmund
Berard, Adrian Louis
Bolster, Carl
Boutin, Carl David
Boutin, Emil J.
Boutin, Girard Joseph
Boutin, Roland Joseph
Bradish, John Alonzo
Burnett, Edward Raymond
Campagna, Raymond Robert
Casey, Howard Paul
Charland, Kenneth L.
Chisholm, William Quirk
Cote, Edmund Albert, Jr.
Curtis, Edward
Davis, Stanley F.
Deal, Robert Charles
Demore, Curtis Lawrence
Eldred, Owen L.
Emery, Glenn Arthur
Germain, Donald Freeman
Goodrich, Donald Conrad
Haralambous, Nikolas
Harper, John Gilbert
Hawkins, Elliott Franklin
Hill, Arnold R.
Houghaboom, Verle Randall
Johnson, Ryland Oliver
Johnson, Donald Douglas
Kendrew, Clarence C.
LaBlanc, Armand
LaCasse, Francis D.
LaCasse, Raymond
LeBlanc, Armand
Mace, David
Mace, Ruth
Mace, Vernon
Martel, Malcolm
Maynard, Art
McKenzie, Clayton
Merchant, Clarence
Merchant, Don
Merchant, Harold
Merrill, Robert

Miller, Kenneth
Miller, Rodney
Miller, Walter
Mongeon, Clarence
Mongeon, Julien
Mongeon, Leonard
Mongeon, Louis V.
Mossey, Irving
Niles, Asahel
O'Brien, Julia
O'Brien, Marshall
Osborn, Jesse
Osborn, Roland
Palady, Frank, Jr.
Palady, Harry
Picard, Earl
Pillsbury, Ralph
Pollard, Fred
Rwwson, Burnett
Robear, Robert
Roberts, Emile
Roberts, Girard
Roberts, Henry
Ruhl, Walter
Rvark, Henry
Sadlier, Ernest
Sadlier, Kenneth
Senna, Anthony
Senna, Harold
Senna, Julius
Senna, Norman
Shortsleeves, Harold
Sinclair, Ray
Siple, Mark
Stevens, Selden
Spaulding, Welton
Stanley, Stanley
Tardie, Clifford
Tardie, Joseph
Tarrier, Henry
Tracy, Clifford
Tulip, Clark
Turner, Clifford
Urie, Carl
Woodard, Clarence
Yandow, Ira

* Williston's records of those who served in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts remain incomplete. To avoid dishonoring individuals by omission, the authors have left out these lists until the town completes its research.

APPENDIX VIII

Killed in Action or in Service

World War I

Brown, Charles M.
Hurlburt, Duane B.
Lashua, Walter C.
Whitton, John C.

World War II

Mace, Vernon R.
Merchant, Clarence J.
Merrill, Robert C.
Tardie, Clifford

Korea

Horton, Leroy S.

Vietnam

Rock, Allen C.

APPENDIX IX

Elected Town Officials

1937 - 1945	
Clerk	W. E. Ferguson (resigned Dec. 8th, 1945)
Treasurer	K. M. Aseltine
1945	
Clerk	Eugene Hanson (appointed Dec. 10th)
Treasurer	K. M. Aseltine
1946	
Clerk	Eugene Hanson
Asst. Clerk	Oscar S. Peterson
Treasurer	K. M. Aseltine
1947	
Clerk	Oscar S. Peterson
Treasurer	K. M. Aseltine
1948 - 1953	
Clerk & Treasurer	Oscar S. Peterson
1953 - 1961	
Clerk & Treasurer	Beatrice B. Deal
1961 - 1973	
Clerk & Treasurer	Harold J. Lyon
1964 - 1966	
Asst. Clerk	Arlene H. Degree
1974 - to present	
Clerk & Treasurer	Arlene H. Degree

APPENDIX X

Representatives to the State House of Representatives

1786-1787	Jonathan Spafford
1788	Amos Brownson
1789-1790	Jonathan Spafford
1791-1792	Amos Brownson
1793-1796	Jonathan Spafford
1791	Solomon Miller
1798-1801	Lemuel Bottum
1802	Nathaniel Allen
1803	Giles Chittenden
1804-1805	Jeremiah French
1809	Lemuel Bottum
1810	Isaac French
1811-1812	Lemeul Bottum
1813	Jeremiah French
1814	Lemuel Bottum
1815-1816	Jeremiah French
1817	Roswell Morton
1818	Martin Chittenden
1819-1820	Chauncey Brownell
1821	Martin Chittenden
1822-1823	Simeon Lee
1824	Chauncey Brownell
1825	Selah Murray
1826	Harry Bradley
1827	None
1828-1830	Truman Chittenden

1831	Alexander Lee
1832-1834	David French
1835	Nathan Stevens
1836	Ezbon Sanford
1837	David French
1836	Nathan Stearns
1836	Ezbon Sanford
1837	David French
1838	William H. French
1839	Nathaniel Parker
1840-1841	Alson Landon
1842	Nathaniel Parker
1843-1846	None
1847	William H. French
1848-1849	Rufus Walston
1850-1851	Roswell B. Fay
1852	None
1853-1854	Hiram D. Smith
1855-1856	Anson Shaw
1857-1858	Abram B. Simonds
1859	Alvin C. Welch
1860-1861	Chauncey W. Brownell
1862-1863	William Miller
1864-1865	Daniel B. Fay
1866-1867	Alvin C. Welch
1868-1869	Jason Clark
1870	William B. Douglas
1872	Lewis H. Talcott
1874	Hiram Walston
1876	George Landon
1878	Jonathan R. Talcott
1880	Hiram A. Clark
1882	Norman E. Miller
1884	Smith Wright
1886	Alfred C. Fay
1888	Albert L. Bingham

1890	Homer E. Wright
1892	John Whitcomb
1894	Horatio S. Johnson
1896	Charles D. Warren
1898	Roswell E. Brown
1900	Clayton J. Wright
1902	William B. Douglas
1904	Harry M. Fay
1906	Clarence D. Caswell
1908	Frank Talcott
1910	James E. Kennedy
1912	Clinton S. Wright
1915	Byron C. Johnson
1917	George F. Irish
1918	C. F. Johnson
1920	Wesley H. Metcalf
1922	Maurice Sullivan
1924	J. H. Fay
1926	A. E. Brown
1928	A. E. Page
1930	E. F. Hanson
1932	C. M. Kirby
1934	Mrs. M. C. Brown
1936	J. Yandow
1938	F. D. Putnam
1940	C. M. Kirby
1942	C. M. Kirby
1944	Guy A. Lamson
1946	Guy A. Lamson
1948	Harold J. Lyon
1950	Harold J. Lyon
1952	Howard P. Lunderville
1954	Harold J. Lyon
1956	Howard P. Lunderville
1958-1961	Walter E. Doenges
1963-1984	Howard P. Lunderville

1985-1992	Ruth Stokes
1993-1994	Howard P. Lunderville
1995-1996	Bennett M. Rose

APPENDIX XI

Williston Historical Society Presidents

Oscar Peterson, Jr.	1974-1975
Rhoda Stultz	1975-1976
Esther Urie	1976-1977
Mary Ellen Bushey	1977-1978
Helen Oustinoff	1978-1979
Lincoln Brownell	1979-1980
Marge Swift	1980-1981
Esther Urie	1981-1983
Mary Tuthill	1983-1985
Cathy Yandell	1985-1987
Ruth Painter	1987-1989
Howard Carpenter	1989-1992
Jack Price	1992-1995
John Joachim	1995-1997
Brad Witham	1997-

APPENDIX XII

Williston Growth

Year	Population
1791	469
1800	836
1810	1195
1820	1246
1830	1608
1840	1554
1850	1669
1860	1479
1870	1441
1880	1342
1890	1161
1900	1176
1910	1000
1920	929
1930	961
1940	1021
1950	1182
1960	1484
1970	3187 [more than doubles]
1980	3843
1990	4872

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

After a successful career in journalism, Willard Sterne Randall switched paths to pursue advanced studies in history at Princeton University. He has become one of the country's most respected popular historians, a contributing editor to *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, visiting professor of American history at John Cabot University in Rome and at Champlain College in Vermont. As an investigative journalist, Randall was the recipient of the Sidney Hillman Prize and the Gerald Loeb Award, as well as the National Magazine Award for Public Service from the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Randall's writing on the birth of the republic has won awards from the American Revolution Round Table, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Colonial Dames of America.

Nancy Nahra is Visiting Professor of Humanities at John Cabot University in Rome, where she teaches courses on Greek and Latin literature and civilization as well as modern poetry. Her own poetry has won national distinction with the John Masefield Award for Narrative Poetry from the Poetry Society of America and her selection as a semi-finalist in the National Poetry Series Open Competition for her book-length manuscript *Strong Dreams*. She has published three volumes of poetry, as well as scholarly articles in history journals. Nahra is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Colby College in Maine, and has a master's degree from Stanford and a doctorate from Princeton University.

Randall and Nahra live with their daughter, Lucy, in Burlington.

WILLISTON

Scale 1½ Inches to the Mile

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Creek, Andersonville. The town's life is studied through its families, illustrious and obscure.

Young men and women who went away to work, immigrants who came for the harvest, stayed and bought farms and homes of their own, tell us about their town, constantly evolving as stagecoach, railroad and commuters' cars bring more people to live in sight of the Green Mountains. How Williston survives, prospers, celebrates its past and prepares for its future is all part of the story of *Thomas Chittenden's Town: A Story of Williston, Vermont.*

WILLARD STERNE RANDALL is the author of award-winning biographies of Washington, Jefferson, Benedict Arnold and other figures from American history. Before taking up history, he was an investigative journalist, receiving the National Magazine Award for Public Service. He teaches American history at Champlain College.

NANCY NAHRA earned her doctorate in Romance languages from Princeton and now teaches classical civilization and literature. One of her poems won the John Masefield Award from the Poetry Society of America. She teaches at Champlain College and is Visiting Professor of Humanities at John Cabot University in Rome.

Randall and Nahra live in Burlington with their daughter, Lucy.

To all People to whom these Presents shall come,----GREETING.

KNOW YE, THAT I Edward Brownell of Canaan in Litchfield County and State of Connecticut

... the Consideration of One Hundred and Nine Dollars and ... three cents ... to my full Satisfaction of my Son Samuel Brownell of ... Canaan County and State aforesaid ... grant, bargain, sell and confirm unto the said Samuel

... half of the whole of the hundred and three acre lott Number two being the fourth division lot of the Original Right of William Frost Senior in the township of Burlington County of Chittenden and State of Vermont, as by the name of said William Frost Senior on the back of the Charter of said Burlington ... the draft thereof recorded in the Proprietors Clerks office ... fully appears three acres of the whole Lott being ... for Public roads as per Jonathan ...'s deed ... the 26th day of February 1800 and recorded in the ... Williston Book 2d page 386 reference thereto being ... half contains fifty one acres & a half with half ... for Publick roads, the half I now deed to my ... the Eastwardly part of said Lott and is Bounded ... as it at present ...

To have and to hold the above granted and bargained Premises, with the Appurtenances thereof, unto him the said Samuel his Heirs and Assigns forever, to his and their own proper Use and Behoof.----- And also I the said Edward Brownell do for my self my Heirs, Executors and Administrators, covenant with the said Samuel His Heirs and Assigns, that at and until the ensealing these Presents, I am well seized of the Premises as a good indefeasible Estate in *Fee-simple*; and have good Right to bargain and sell the same, in Manner and Form as is above written; and that the same is free of all Incumbrances whatsoever. *And furthermore,* I the said Edward ... by these Presents, bind my self and my Heirs forever, to warrant and defend the above granted and bargained Premises to him the said Samuel His Heirs and Assigns, against all Claims and Demands whatsoever.

In Witness whereof, I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal, the 16th Day of May Anno Domini, 1801

the word (appears) interlined before signing

Signed, sealed and delivered,)
in Presence of)

Oliver Root
Nelson Keith

Edward Brownell

Litchfield County, ss. Canaan 28th day of May 1801

PESRONALLY appeared Edward Brownell *Signer and Sealer of the foregoing Instrument, and acknowledged the same to be* his *free Act and Deed, before me,*

Giles Pettibone Justice of Peace

1801 deed for a Williston homestead